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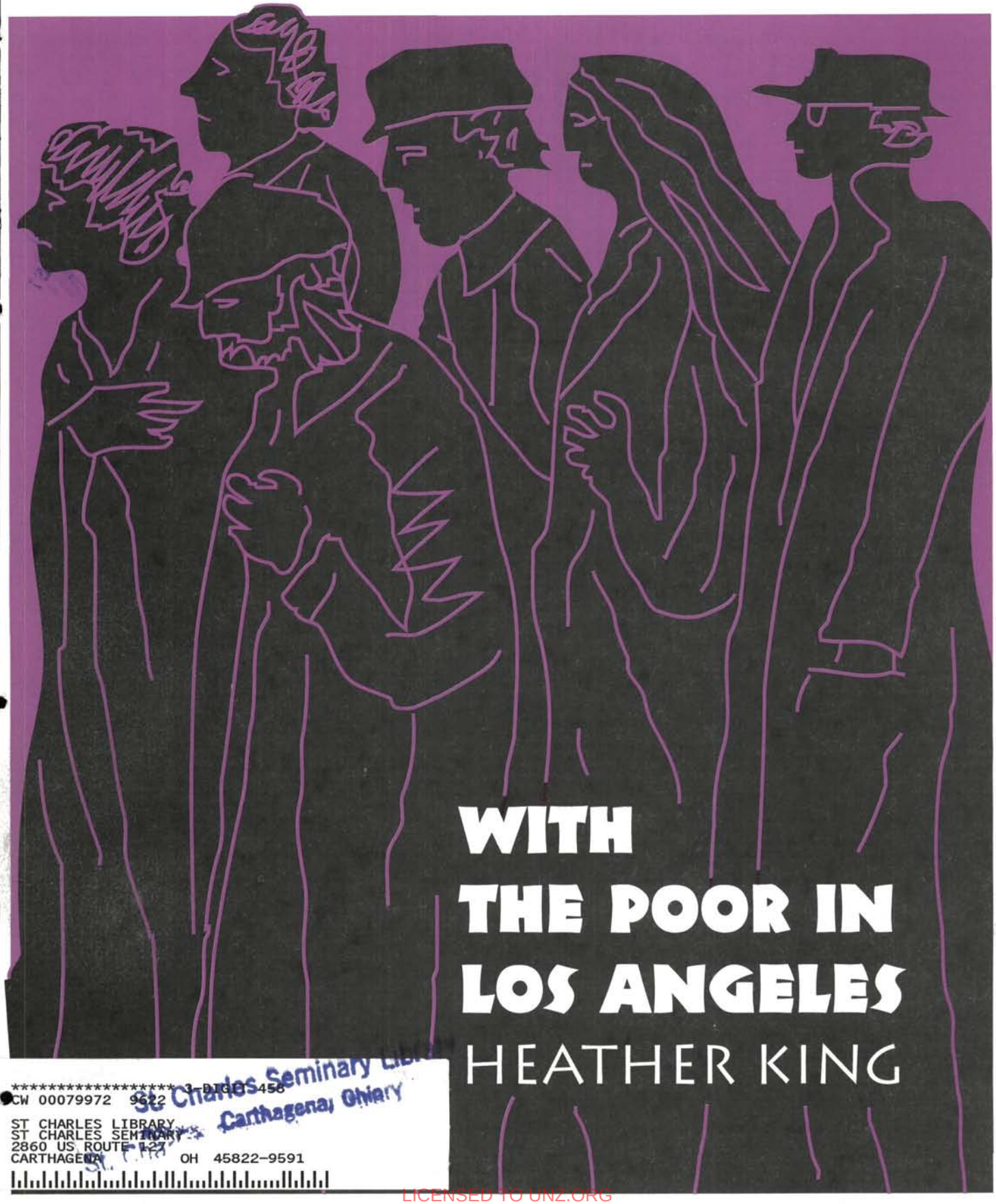

WITH THE POOR IN LOS ANGELES

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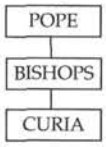
To the Editors

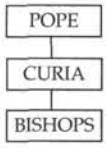
Get organized

The Quinn/O'Connor feud could be solved with agreement on a "table of organization":

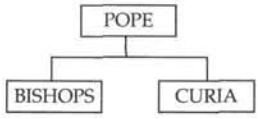
Quinn's objective



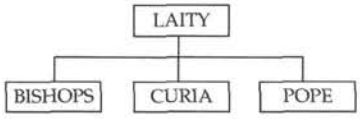
As O'Connor sees it



The solution

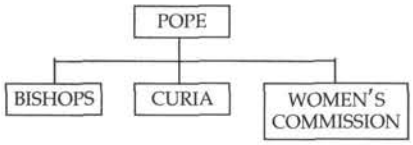


"We Are the Church"



EDWARD F. HALPIN
Park Ridge, Ill.

From the editors: This is catching. With apologies to Mary Douglas (*see* her article, June 14), we offer another model:



However, a fully developed table of organization would have to find places for the synod, a third Vatican Council, diocesan and parish pastoral councils, the major religious orders, Lou Holtz, and, of course, *Commonweal*.

It's not a game

As a fellow alumnus of the process, I agree with Marian E. Crowe ["The Annulment Game," September 13] that the church's current teaching on annulments challenges "the common understanding" of marriage, fails to satisfy the "popular mind," and is particularly difficult to explain to one's children. But I cannot agree when she concludes from these communications difficulties that the church has often forced participants "to act disingenuously" in a "dishonest" annulment process.

True, the church's explanation of the process makes little sense to one who does not accept the key distinction between marriage as a civil institution and marriage as a sacrament. Despite Crowe's contention that the use of certain terms, among them "sacramental," serves to "obfuscate" the issue for most people, the sacramental-civil distinction has always played a key role in the church's theology of marriage.

No one would argue that Kevin Kane, author of the companion article, was not married before he met Monsignor Thomas Leonard outside Holy Trinity Church. But if he had already participated in the *sacrament* of marriage, what's the point of his story? So if there is a big difference for Catholics between "getting married" and "getting married in the church," why is it not proper for the church to define "canonically" just what the latter phrase means?

The annulment process offers a way for divorced Catholics—that is, those whose marriages have been dissolved in the eyes of the state—to determine whether their sacramental marriages were, in fact, valid—or "not fruitful," as Crowe prefers. Why is such a process considered dishonest, or only a game?

As for Crowe's claim that the current teaching on annulments holds the participants in the sacrament of matrimony to a higher standard of psychological awareness than is the case with other sacraments, she solves her own problem when she notes that the "proper intention" of "minister and recipient" is important for all sacraments. The reason that the attentiveness of bride and bridegroom is far more critical than the attentiveness of an infant being baptized or a teenager being confirmed is that the couple are functioning as both ministers and recipients in the rite.

The church's new willingness to consider psychological and emotional impediments to a valid marriage flows directly from the renewed theology of marriage since Vatican II, which emphasizes the way a man and woman administer the sacrament to each other through their acts of commitment. Thus, the primary test of a valid sacramental marriage is the presence of a freely rendered commitment. Reciting the marriage vows with crossed fingers (literally or figuratively) is not allowed.

Since Crowe has participated in the annulment process, a two-step proceeding, she should not be so surprised that a very high percentage of annulment cases accepted by diocesan tribunals are settled in favor of the petitioner. This fact does not of itself show that the process is being administered in a manner inconsistent with the church's position on the permanence of the marriage bond. Getting one's case approved is not the hard part of the annulment process; getting the case accepted for review is. Before the case is accepted, the petitioner must establish the canon law equivalent of probable cause. The petitioner sets forth his or her complete argument in favor of the annulment during the first phase. If the judges of the tribunal were to accept cases with a high probability of failure, they would be doing both the petitioners and themselves a disservice. A high rejection rate for accepted cases would be a much more troubling sign of church

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COMMONWEAL

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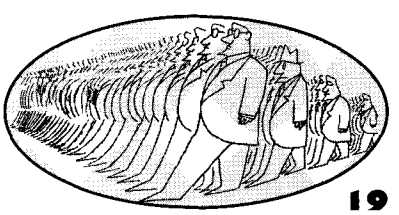

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mismanagement.

I am pleased by Crowe's recognition that the annulment process can be "healing, clarifying, and therapeutic," but I wish she had chosen to refute rather than reinforce the negative misconceptions that too many have toward this most important service offered by the church to divorced Catholics. An annulment can be a source of tremendous consolation to those coping with the pain of divorce, for it indicates that though the failed marriage was not blessed, a subsequent marriage can be.

RICHARD HAAS
Iselin, N.J.

The writer replies:

First, I concur in Mr. Haas's objection to the term "annulment game" in the title of my article as published. My own proposed title was "A Plea for Honesty about Annulments." The title the editors preferred conveys a cynical and trivializing tone that I did not intend.

On substance: Indeed, "the distinction between civil marriage and marriage as a sacrament" is the crux of the misunderstanding surrounding this issue. The point is that *as lived experience*, for most married people, the distinction seems artificial and false. A marriage is a marriage. When you try to explain this distinction to others, you elicit only looks of stupefaction. The civil marriage/sacramental marriage distinction basically ends up saying that only a good (sacramental) marriage is indissoluble. Obviously, any marriage that fits the criteria for sacramental marriage (two fully mature, free people, after due discretion, forming an intimate, loving communion) never would be dissolved! A *reductio ad absurdum*! It sounds as if the church is trying to find a loophole whereby it can be pastorally humane and not condemn divorced Catholics to a life of celibacy, without appearing to contradict its previous teaching.

In this respect, consider that according to the current requirements for a canonically valid sacramental marriage, a great many couples throughout history would not be considered sacramentally married; arranged marriages, for example, could now be annulled on grounds of lack of due discretion. If only Henry VIII had known!

The biggest stumbling block to allowing divorce and remarriage is, of course, Jesus' prohibition of it in the Gospels. His divorce sayings are pretty explicit and unambiguous. It is difficult to read these sayings and think, "He had in mind only sacramental marriages—only those that were entered into with maturity, awareness, full and free consent of the will, and a clear and unambiguous intention to form a communion of intimacy." I can only believe that Jesus was referring to anyone married according to Jewish law.

To be faithful to our tradition, we must take account of the Gospels' prohibition of divorce. If we can allow divorced people to remarry and stay in full communion with the church without abandoning our fidelity to Jesus, then I would beg theologians to develop and articulate an explanation *more* convincing than the current rationale. If the annulment process is correct and faithful, it should be possible to explain it in a way that does not strain the credulity of Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

I do not criticize the annulment process on the ground that "it fails to satisfy the popular mind." I do not look to the secular world for approval of this process; if anything, I wish the church were more countercultural. But I am embarrassed by language which seems to me dishonest.

"Erica, I'm a fool in love."

Regarding Kevin Kane: I am not surprised that he felt different after being married in the church. Catholics naturally want to be married in a Catholic church with the blessing of the priest and the liturgy they love. My argument is that *that procedure* confers the sacrament. Such an understanding would make matrimony more like the other sacraments. But to reserve sacramentality only for marriages that meet all the mental, psychological, and emotional criteria enumerated in the literature on annulment—criteria that are practically impossible to pin down, even for the participants themselves—makes matrimony a very strange sacrament indeed.

MARIAN E. CROWE

Use those keys

Marian Crowe's very sensitive article on the annulment process points up what is becoming a serious problem, despite the caring work of diocesan marriage tribunals. The rising number of annulment cases should press the church to grant divorces to couples in sacramental, consummated marriages that have failed.

The church already grants divorces—not annulments—in valid nonsacramental marriages under the scripturally based Pauline Privilege and also in sacramental but nonconsummated marriages. Over the past thousand years, with the probable exception of divorces granted to African slaves separated from their spouses by the Portuguese, and possibly also to similarly situated Irish indentured expatriates, the church has not granted divorces in sacramental, consummated marriages.

Despite this history, I would argue—with some backing from respectable sources—that nothing pre-

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY, 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, ME 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, NY 10038.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest, and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, OH 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional offices. Copyright © 1996 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $44; Canada, $47; foreign, $50. Special two-year rate: U.S. $75; Canada, $81; foreign, $87. Annual rates for air-mail delivery outside U.S.: Western Hemisphere, $84; Europe, $89; other parts of the world, $99. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Antonucci; pp. 3, 4, 20, 31, Ross, Rothco; p. 3, Charlot; pp. 3, 24, Valerry; p. 6, photo of Garrison Keillor, courtesy Minnesota Public Radio; p. 11, photo by Michael J. Okoniewski, courtesy Catholic News Service; p. 14, Salo, Rothco; p. 17, photo of Mandy Patinkin, Bill Moyers, and Alfre Woodard by Duane Michals, courtesy PBS; p. 26, Matt, Rothco; p. 28, Ray, Rothco; columnist portraits, Elaine Mills.

Undermining the peace

The Israeli cabinet and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hold Yasir Arafat wholly responsible for the outbreak of violence in Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. It is possible they actually believe this. But to the rest of the world the balance of responsibility points in the opposite direction.

Opening a new entrance to an ancient tunnel running near the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, two of Islam's holy sites, may seem a small matter, a means of enhancing tourism. But the deed was done at night, in secret, under heavy guard; Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert turned the incident into a major provocation by using it to reassert claims of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. The whole area, below the Dome of the Rock, which includes the ruins of the Second Temple, has been the source of continuing disputes between Muslim officials and Israel. Since 1967, when Israel captured East Jerusalem, extremist Jewish groups have called for the destruction of the Islamic holy places in order to build a new temple (*Washington Post*, September 27). Even so, the matter of a tunnel for tourists eventually might have been negotiable had the peace process been going anywhere.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has been in office now for three months, and except for a cold and formal handshake with Arafat, the Likud government, at this writing, has not made a single public gesture to assure the Palestinians that the Oslo peace agreements continue to govern Israeli policy toward Gaza and the West Bank. In reality, a contrary policy is being put in place. Israeli settlements on the West Bank are being expanded, and new ones are planned. The Israeli army withdrawal from Hebron scheduled for March has been delayed. Land confiscation continues on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. And in small, but highly symbolic ways, Arafat has been humiliated by bureaucratic measures meant to keep him from flying between Gaza and the West Bank.

The Holy City being the toughest issue facing the peace process, its status was left to future negotiations. The Palestinians were not mistaken in understanding the opening of the tunnel to be a reassertion of Israeli claims to sovereignty over the whole of Jerusalem. The demonstrations and stone-throwing should have surprised no one, least of all the Israelis. But the brief, armed response of the Palestinian police to Israeli soldiers was a surprise, and has proved to be an exceedingly dangerous gesture; more people were killed in two days than during the whole six years of the *intifada*. The Israeli Army is now patrolling the West Bank with tanks and helicopters.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's election campaign advertised him as a pragmatist—a quality he has yet to demonstrate in office. If ever there was a moment for pragmatic calculation, this is it. The price of evading the peace process is now shown to be a costly one in lives and in shattered expectations. Netanyahu can choose to pick up with Arafat the threads of the peace accords, or he can plunge Israelis and Palestinians into a war more deadly than the one they left behind. The choice seems to be very clear to many Israelis and to the world that looks on in dismay—clear to almost everyone but Mr. Netanyahu and the Likud government.

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ABIGAIL McCARTHY

FITZGERALD AT 100

Great fiction, great history

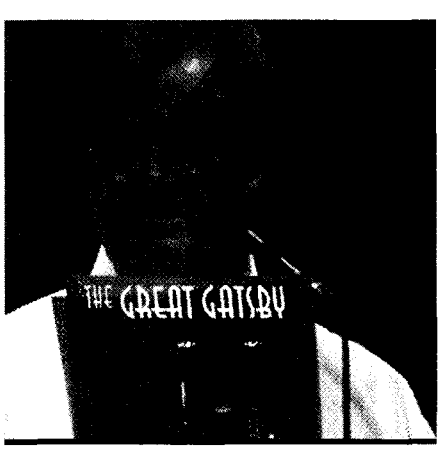
F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940), one of the most influential and famous of American writers, left behind a body of work that defined an age—"the jazz age"—and a generation, and did much to illuminate the American character and probe the American soul. Because this September 24 was his hundredth birthday, there have been widespread celebrations of the Fitzgerald centennial throughout the year, including the reissuing of Fitzgerald's *The Jazz Age* (New Directions).

Rockville, Maryland, where Fitzgerald is buried in the family plot in Saint Mary's Cemetery, has held a year-long observance culminating on September 28 in a literary conference at Montgomery College, at which author William Styron was awarded the first F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Award and read from Fitzgerald's works. The observance will end with a memorial service at Saint Mary's Church in December.

Fitzgerald may lie among his father's ancestors in Maryland but he himself was formed and his view of life determined by his upbringing in Saint Paul, Minnesota, his birthplace. His mother's mercantile family was on the edge of the Saint Paul ascendancy, the scions of the traders, and the lumber and railroad barons who developed the city. He attended private schools with their young—Saint Paul Academy, Newman, Princeton—and his time at these schools served to intensify his feeling that he was always near, but never really of, great wealth. But he was of Saint Paul.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the novel most evocative of Fitzgerald's genius, the character who is his *alter ego*, Nick Carraway, writes that he comes from "a country of wide lawns and friendly trees." And in the end, Carraway concludes that he, and the other characters—Gatsby, Daisy and Tom Buchanan, and Jordan Baker—were "Westerners...subtly, unadaptable to Eastern life."

> One of my most vivid memories is of coming back west from prep school and later from college at Christmas time. Those who went farther than Chicago would gather in the old dim Union Station at six o'clock of a December evening with a few Chicago friends already caught up into their own holiday gaieties to bid them a hasty goodbye....
>
> When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. We drew in deep breaths of it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour before we melted indistinguishably into it again.
>
> That's my middle-west—not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns but the thrilling, returning trains of my youth and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow. I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name.



Fitzgerald's feeling about the very rich, epitomized in the famous quotation "The very rich are different from you and me," began in his Saint Paul experience. Thus he wrote of Tom and Daisy Buchanan (Westerners by his definition),

> They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made....

Appropriately enough, the biggest celebration of the Fitzgerald centennial was organized in Saint Paul by radio personality Garrison Keillor of "A Prairie Home Companion." It stretched from September 24 through September 28 with a marathon reading of Fitzgerald's novels and short stories by actors and writers and Fitzgerald connections like his granddaughter Eleanor Lanahan and his wife Zelda's cousin, Robert Sayre. Among the writers-as-readers were E.L. Doctorow, Donald Hall, Bobbie Ann Mason, Jane Smiley, Michael Dorris, Patricia Hampl, etc.

The planned events ranged from the unveiling of a bronze statue of Fitzgerald, the issue of a Fitzgerald stamp, and a festive theater parade to a special live broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion," featuring Fitzgerald and a Great Gatsby Ball.

There was an element of the prodigal son in the Saint Paul celebration. According to Keillor there was a time that "Saint Paul was wary of Fitzgerald's flamboyance and his alcoholism, and perhaps it was embarrassed by his burnout and all the small, mean anecdotes told about him, but now it's time to celebrate him as the magnificent writer and brave man that he was."

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It is true that, after the halcyon days of American writers and artists in Paris, when Fitzgerald himself was wealthy enough so that he and Zelda moved among the rich with ease, Fitzgerald seemed to lose his compass and his gift. But at the end of his life his genius returned and was evident in the brilliant, unfinished novel *The Love of the Last Tycoon*. It was finally recognized that, as he himself said, his portrayal of life was essentially moral. When Cardinal William Baum secured permission for the interment of the nonpracticing Catholic Fitzgerald in a Catholic cemetery, he described Fitzgerald as "an artist who was able, with lucidity and poetic imagination, to portray the struggle between grace and death. His characters are in this great drama seeking God and seeking love."

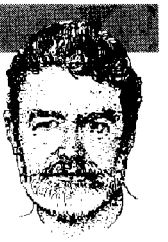
As one writer asked to participate in the Saint Paul marathon, I reread Fitzgerald. What struck me most forcibly was the realization that, unlike many writers today whose books seem to come from a world apart and smell of academe, he wrote as a man of his own time about his time. Fitzgerald scholar Matthew J. Bruccoli notes this in his introduction to *Gatsby* and adds, "great fiction is great social history." For example, *The Great Gatsby* is accepted as the defining novel of the twenties—the get-rich-quick decade of opportunity, great possibilities, and hedonistic pleasure. It was also the decade of the beginnings of organized crime and unprincipled speculation in the stock market. "Although Fitzgerald joined the parties and chronicled them, he wrote in judgment," Bruccoli writes. His Gatsby rose and fell in the context of the realities and illusions of that era of which the author was a part.

In the same way, Fitzgerald as a screenwriter in his last years was part of the movie industry world. It is generally agreed that his *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, even unfinished, is the best novel ever written about the movies—the quintessential American industry of the twentieth century.

Fitzgerald understood his world. In the end he was uncompromising about writing its story well. Perhaps the best evaluation of his work is Fitzgerald's own, in a letter to his daughter at college: "I am not a great man, but sometimes I think the *impersonal and objective* quality of my talent and the sacrifices of it, in pieces, to preserve its essential value has some sort of epic grandeur" (italics mine). □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY



WE ARE NOT OUR OWN

And that's a comfort

Years ago those who opposed permissive abortion laws predicted that euthanasia would be the next great cause, and they were met with ridicule: Beware the slippery-slope argument, they were told.

Of course they were right. Doctor Jack Kevorkian has gone, in the estimation of many, from being someone ghoulish and scary, an obsessive neurotic who helps depressed people to kill themselves, to someone who is just a little too intense, a kind of Ralph Nader for the Hemlock Society set, a misguided defender of a basic human right.

I have no doubt that Doctor Kevorkian is sincere, but sincerity is not a virtue; it is more like a mood. It is a mood that echoes something in the air, something very American, and it is easy to see how it connects with permissive abortion laws: both have to do with the rights of the individual. Both assume the unchallengeable nature of the idea of rights, and the idea of the individual. Both assume the body as something owned by its bearer, a form of property or real estate. And because all of these ideas are accepted simply as true by most Americans, it follows that abortion must be permitted, and that euthanasia is acceptable.

Simone Weil once wrote that the idea of rights was Roman in origin, and had much of its basis in the right to own human beings; a father, for example, could claim not only his slaves but his wife and children as his property. Weil believed that the idea of justice, and the duties and moral obligations which flow from it, offered a more profound way of understanding our relationships with one another.

Quite apart from the notion of rights, the idea of the individual and the ideas involving autonomy that flow from it are taken for granted by most of us. And yet, they are, to say the least, questionable.

As Christians we believe in the person, but not the individual. The person exists, but only in relationship. This is essential to how we must think of ourselves and our selfhood, and this is precisely what abortion and euthanasia violate.

The ideas of self-sufficiency and autonomy so valued by our culture are given the lie by our experience: We have language and culture because of our relationship with other people; we have nothing that is simply and uniquely our own. The configuration varies from person to person (much in the way that no two shells or snowflakes are exactly alike), but as persons we are the results of lovemaking by people other than ourselves, and a language and culture we are given by people other than ourselves. We are free within this limit to make of it all that we will, but even our understanding of this freedom is in some sense given to us by someone else. Our freedom is marvelous, essential to what we are; but the paradox is that we must finally surrender even that. We are not free *not* to be mortal, not to be contingent, and nothing tells us of this contingency more powerfully than the involuntary nature of family, and the fact of mortality.

Abortion and euthanasia assume the ideas of individuality and autonomy

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like nothing else. After all, doesn't a woman have a right to control her own body? Isn't my body my own?

Ultimately the answer is no—because we are not our own, and death proves, more than anything else could, that even if we could control our deaths (and suicides don't; they control the hour, which is different) we haven't done much. Christianity offers us an alternative to the despair which can come from any serious contemplation of the human condition. It tells us that we are not our own—something we could see without the aid of Christianity—but it also tells us that we exist because we are loved, and that love has overcome the death which drives our fears.

At the same time, it is hard in the face of the evidence of death to believe this. When I go to nursing homes and hospitals I find it very easy to sympathize with people who, faced with the thought of long suffering or dementia, want not to endure any of it and are willing to consider suicide. I can sympathize with them completely, and yet I know that this is finally to surrender to despair. I remember giving Communion to a person who knew that she was dying, and when she had received it we talked a little, and it was clear to me that she hoped what she had just done meant something real and was not an illusion. She was really holding on to the edge of hope with her fingernails at the most crucial time of her life. It is part of what the cross means; it is our cross, to live out the hope that the cross is not the end, that death has been overcome by the source of life, and living it out in the face of death is also a sign of that life. □

Wilson Carey McWilliams

CLINTON'S RE-ELECTION

The 'X' factor

The presidential race will get tighter, especially when the polls begin to limit themselves to likely voters, but for practical purposes, the election is already over. The polls in June almost invariably forecast the outcome in November. In 1988, it felt dramatic when George Bush overcame the big lead Michael Dukakis enjoyed, briefly, after the Democratic Convention, but the voters wound up where they'd been at the end of the primaries. Harry Truman, that perennial exception, is the only candidate to make a true comeback, but Bob Dole is no Harry Truman. Barring some disaster, Bill Clinton will be reelected, and the realistic objective of Dole's campaign is to hold down the president's margin of victory.

Republican leaders know that, and have shifted their emphasis to retaining control of Congress. Through his campaign managers, Dole let Republican senators know that he prefers no bill restricting immigration to one Clinton would be willing to sign and for which Clinton could take credit. Dole urged them to add a provision allowing states to deny schooling to the children of illegal immigrants, because the president would veto such a bill, allowing Dole to label him soft-on-immigrants. But Dole's erstwhile colleagues—especially those from states where immigration is a hot issue—proved recalcitrant, showing a tell-tale disposition to shelter themselves from the coming storm.

That is especially true because the Republicans have a good shot at keeping their congressional majorities. In the House, they expect to capture more Democratic seats from the South, partly balancing their expected losses elsewhere and ending up, they hope, with a narrowed majority and Gingrich back in the Speaker's chair. Still, a Democratic House is at least a good bet, and Republicans will have to work to hold onto the Senate, where they began the year counting on making gains. Republican moderates—William Weld of Massachusetts, Rudy Boschwitz in Minnesota, and Richard Zimmer in New Jersey—have excellent chances of winning Democratic seats, but in state after state, conservative strength in the primaries has left Republicans with candidates far enough to the right to make Democrats competitive if not likely winners. And if Clinton wins 55 percent of the vote or more, there may be enough coattails to pull Democrats back into control on Capitol Hill.

How did it come to this, in a year Republicans thought would complete their conquest of power? The easy explanation, of course, is that Bob Dole is a bad candidate—too old, too marked by his years in Congress, too maladroit as a campaigner. But the Republican elite fixed on Dole, knowing his liabilities, because they considered him a safe candidate, unlikely to offend any part of what they took to be a winning coalition. The GOP leadership, in other words, overrated its strength with the electorate, and that, along with Bill Clinton's artful empathy, is the real story of the 1996 election.

The dominant feeling among the voters has edged away from anger, the Republicans' 1994 emotional stock-in-trade, and toward a sense of vulnerability. In economic life, this is a commonplace: Globalization and technological change, Mr. Gingrich's "new wave," is threatening jobs and unsettling communities, especially among Americans thirty-five and older, who essentially predate the "information revolution" and who recognize, in ugly neologisms like "outsourcing," euphemisms for their own dispensability. More Americans are working and doing reasonably well, but this modest yet uneasy prosperity only underlines their "fear of falling." And since voters are less influenced by their immediate economic circumstances than by their expectations about the future, that worry is bound to be potent at the polls.

However, as the party of the private sector, inclined to let the market have its way, Republicans find it almost impossible to speak to that uneasiness. Dole's proposed tax cut isn't catching on. Voters doubt he can pull if off; they also suspect—shrewdly, given New Jersey's experience under Christie Whitman—that they will pay elsewhere for any loss

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of income-tax revenue; they're apt to recognize that Dole's program would accentuate America's escalating inequality; and most important, they see that lower taxes do not have any necessary connection to better and more secure jobs. Dole knows as much. He tends to dodge questions about international competition and his comments about work are few and syntactically obscure. Compared to Dole's message, Clinton's own rather anemic reponse—he hasn't had much to say beyond the minimum wage and job retraining—manages to sound relativelys strong and hopeful. Jack Kemp, to be sure, finds it easy to be lyrical about growth, but even Kemp presumes that, for a majoirty of voters, government is primarily a burden, an intruder, or a despoiler.

But it isn't the 1980s anymore. Abstractly, as a matter of rhetoric, Americans have been suspicious of government at least since the heyday of the New Deal, an attitude that has grown stronger in recent times. But by agreeing that "the era of big government is over," Clinton helped move the game of politics from the field of symbols to the arena of practice, where Americans have consistently supported—and demanded—a high level of government programs and services.

Albeit ambivalently, it strengthens the disposition to look to government that more and more Americans find themselves in a "paranoid position," feeling baffled and kicked around by largely invisible forces, powers that it's only prudent to suspect even if they seem benign. In 1996 paranoia has taken a stride toward the mainstream: 48 percent of Americans, *Newsweek* told us, believe in UFOs and are convinced that govenrment is covering up the evidence, while 29 percent believe the government has been in contact with aliens. The TV series "The X-Files" (like the film *Independence Day*), symbolizes that rather creepy dimension of the national mood. It also tells us something about our politics: The heroes are people who work for the government. Americans may suspect officials of being in league with malign powers, but they also know, at least dimly, that government is the best hope they've got. Compared with forces like the market—to say nothing of extraterrestrial empires—government is somewhat subject to our control. We need it desperately, which is why we rail against it so extravagantly when it lets us down, and why "shutting down the government"—blamed on the Congress—was a disaster for the GOP.

Even the best Republican campaigners are finding themselves burdened by the error Gingrich and his followers made in interpreting the 1994 elections as a mandate for the radical demolition of government. As Clinton gave ground—probably too much, though it's hard to quarrel with the results—Republicans were tempted into what looked like rule-or-ruin zealotry. Democrats, by contrast, were chastened into a king of moderation: many have complained about Clinton's accommodations, especially his willingness to sign the Welfare Reform Bill, but virtually all of them have fallen into line, and no Democrat since F.D.R. has had so untroubled a march to nomination. At the Republican Convention, Dole tried to shake the image, but in the electorate's lingering memory, Republicans still seem at least a little scary.

The prominence of right-wing terrorism, exemplified by the Oklahoma City bombing, has given a special edge to these apprehensions. Most Americans have grown accustomed to associating disorder with international terrorists or with the Left, and Republicans have made it a habit to run against the 1960s. Events in 1996, however, have made it clear that the radical Right is at least as savage in its attacks on government, law-enforcement, and other supposed agents of the "New World Order" as the '60s Left ever was. For the most part, moreover, the New Left was insistently public and visible; the radical rightists are secretive and often covert, united by the codes and channels of the Internet—"strangers in our midst," Dirk Johnson called them. The evident rhetorical affinities between radical rightists and Republican militants in Congress like Helen Chenoweth of Idaho and Steven Stockman of Texas have helped make Middle American voters, still unhappy with liberalism, almost as uneasy about the direction of the GOP.

Sum it up: Bob Dole and his party seem unable to speak to our fears and too apt to add to our worries. Bill Clinton doesn't frighten us: His leadership style suggests the Pillsbury Doughboy, soft and eager to please, and we know he will be disinclined to ask us for much. In 1996, those qualities will be enough. But Americans also know that we face problems—the impending crisis in Social Security and Medicare, to say nothing of our broader dilemmas—that cannot be smarmed away. Clinton and the new Congress will need a better statecraft to bridge those obstacles to a decent and democratic future. □

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Gregory R. Beabout

CATHOLIC WINS

The Illinois Senate race

For the first time in its history, the state of Illinois is going to elect a Catholic to the United States Senate. Paul Simon's seat has opened. Will it be filled by Dick Durbin, a fifty-one-year-old liberal from Springfield, or Al Salvi, a thirty-six-year-old conservative from Waucanda, north of Chicago? Though both are Catholic, they disagree on almost all of the major policy questions of the day. They clash not only on abortion but on the economy and the role of the federal government.

The American political map has so changed that there are now more than twice as many Catholics in Congress as adherents of any other religion. Yet at the same time that Catholics are positioned to have a significant impact on political life, a tension has arisen within Catholicism that parallels the political divide in American politics. The Illinois senate race is a textbook model of those tensions and divides.

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Democratic candidate Dick Durbin grew up in East Saint Louis and is the product of nineteen years of Catholic education. He entered the world of Washington politics while a senior at Georgetown (two years ahead of Bill Clinton) as an aide in the office of Senator Paul Douglas (D–Ill.). Then, after working for Paul Simon in Illinois, he eventually won a seat in the U.S. House where he has served seven terms representing what was once Abraham Lincoln's district. Durbin is the heir apparent to his mentors, Simon and Douglas. From Durbin's Catholic, working-class neighborhood he developed political sympathies that were pro-worker, seeing himself as a defender of the poor and the working class, a protector of the weak and the elderly.

Durbin was influenced not only by Douglas and Simon, but also by the 1960 presidential race. Durbin claims "the reason John Kennedy was able to become the first Catholic president was that he convinced enough American voters that he would make decisions independent of the doctrinal requirements of the Catholic church." This emphasis on personal independence is seen as a strength by some, but not a few of Durbin's constituents have been critical of his voting record on abortion. He worries that some Catholic voters now have a standard of orthodoxy that would have disqualified Kennedy.

Republican candidate Al Salvi is almost a generation younger than Durbin. Like Durbin, Salvi was educated at Catholic schools, graduating from Notre Dame in 1981. Salvi grew up in a family of Catholic Democrats, and Salvi's father always voted Democratic until 1996 when he registered Republican so that he could vote for his son in the primary.

The younger Salvi became a Republican while he was in law school at the University of Illinois. He identifies himself as both a social and fiscal conservative. As the Democratic party moved to the left during the '70s and '80s, Salvi began to feel uncomfortable with the language of choice that dominated the political outlook of many of his fellow Democrats. When Ronald Reagan spoke on campus, Salvi realized he had much more in common with the Republicans than with the Democrats. It was primarily the social issues that attracted Salvi to Reagan: the emphasis on family, hard work, and Reagan's prolife stand. But Salvi was also developing sympathies with the Republicans on economic issues: lower taxes, a balanced budget, and reform of federal welfare programs.

Salvi was elected twice to the Illinois House, but he was a virtual unknown before the '96 spring primaries. The Illinois Republican leaders backed Lt. Governor Robert Kustra, a prochoice Catholic, and Salvi trailed by more than 20 points through most of the campaign. Local pundits painted him as an unknown, conservative outsider. His victory caught many by surprise. Though he ran an aggressive television campaign in Chicago that emphasized lower taxes, Salvi had surprisingly strong grassroots support outside the Chicago television market, especially downstate among church groups attracted to his prolife themes.

On abortion, Durbin and Salvi split along party lines. When Durbin was first elected to Congress in 1982, he ran as a prolife Democrat, but his position has changed over the years and he now identifies himself as prochoice. A proponent of the partial-birth abortion procedure, he defends it with the language of choice. Durbin insists that he privately agrees with the Catholic church on abortion, but he adds that "from a public policy viewpoint, I believe that this is a moral decision that should be made by individuals." In these matters he sounds more like John Rawls than John Paul II. In contrast, Salvi has been a defender of the right-to-life position, claiming that the U.S. Senate does not have an articulate spokesperson who can publicly make the civil rights argument on behalf of the unborn; he aspires to that role.

The candidates also differ on economic issues. Here, the disparity follows a tension within the two great principles of Catholic social teaching: solidarity and subsidiarity. The principle of solidarity says that all humans are part of a common family, and that society has a responsibility to uphold the dignity of every human being. The principle of subsidiarity states that social action should always be carried out at the smallest level appropriate to the issue. Social action is best carried out in local groups rather than through large bureaucracies. The principle of subsidiarity places a strong emphasis on mediating social structures (family, neighborhood, voluntary associations, the church) rather than reducing politics to individual rights guaranteed by the state.

In this tension between solidarity and subsidiarity, Durbin's voting record has tended to emphasize solidarity. Optimistic about government's ability to defend the weak and provide a safety net, Durbin moves from the principle of society's responsibility to help the poor to policy proposals for government intervention. Salvi is more suspicious about government bureaucracy, fearing that in reaching beyond its appropriate task, the government creates dependency rather than dignity. Some of his campaign speeches seem to be taken from John Paul's *Centesimus annus*: "Defects in the social-assistance state are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the state....Needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need." Salvi's campaign emphasizes parental and family responsibilities, church involvement, voluntary organizations, and local communities. He and his wife have several times opened their home to unwed mothers facing crisis pregnancies, a response he claims is more responsible and more efficient than expecting a federal bureaucracy to respond to a social crisis. In contrast to some fiscal conservatives, Salvi's conservatism moves beyond self-interested market individualism by emphasizing social justice through local communities.

In Catholic social teaching, the balance between solidarity and subsidiarity is maintained through an ongoing tension: think globally, act locally. It remains to be seen how that plays in Peoria. Polls show a close Senate race, still too close to call, despite Clinton's lead in Illinois. □

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TWO TRADITIONS

Historical consciousness meets the immutable

Charles E. Curran

Do Catholics suffer from schizophrenia when it comes to papal moral teaching? I am not referring to the often cited differences between liberals and conservatives; in fact, each faction frequently seems to have its own form of schizophrenia. Liberal Catholics enthusiastically endorse papal social teaching while being somewhat disenchanted with papal sexual teaching. Conservative Catholics often exhibit the reverse preference. There is an objective basis for these different reactions and I want to examine them here.

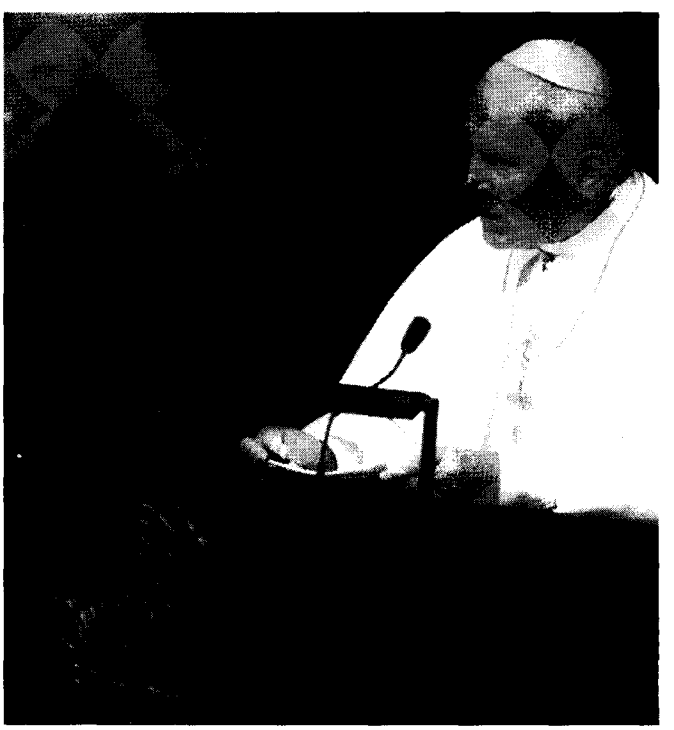
In September 1993, John Paul II issued the encyclical *Veritatis splendor* to deal with, as he said, a "genuine crisis": an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine even in seminaries and theologates (*Origins*, October 14, 1993, nn. 4, 5). In March 1995, his *Evangelium vitae* (*Origins*, April 6, 1995) reaffirmed in a very strong manner traditional Catholic teaching on murder, direct abortion, and euthanasia. As I hope to show in comparing *Veritatis splendor* and *Evangelium vitae* with the pope's address to the United Nations in October 1995 (*Origins*, October 19, 1995), an important difference in approach and emphasis continues to exist within the total ambit of papal teaching on moral issues between personal morality, especially sexual issues, and social issues.

Four very significant differences in approach exist between the two encyclicals and the UN address.

- First, the two encyclicals downplay historical development and even see it as a threat to existing teaching. Their emphasis is on what has been true always and everywhere. According to *Veritatis splendor*, new approaches to Catholic moral theology reject the traditional doctrine regarding the natural law and the universality and permanent validity of its precepts (n. 4). *Evangelium vitae* proclaims the older Catholic teaching about life in all its dimensions and reaffirms it because of the extraordinary increase in the threats to life in the modern world. In the pope's view this disturbing state of affairs is expanding in a cultural climate which gives crimes against life a new and ever more sinister character (nn. 3, 4).

Contrast this to the pope's UN address. Here, John Paul wants to reflect on "the extraordinary changes of the last few years" (n. 1), with the "global acceleration of that quest for freedom which is one of the great dynamics of human history" (n. 2). He observes that many people at the end of the twentieth century are fearful of themselves and of the future. We must learn to conquer fear, he says, through a new flourishing of the human spirit based on an authentic culture of freedom and a rediscovery of the spirit of truth (n. 16).

- Second, *Evangelium vitae* develops its theme by contrasting the culture-of-life with the culture-of-death at work in the world today. "We are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, 'the culture of death' and 'the culture of life'" (n. 28: also nn. 21, 24). Catholic teaching, including its philosophical refinements of direct and indirect killing and direct abortion, constitutes in the pope's view the culture-of-life in mortal opposition with all in society who disagree with this position and who foster the culture-of-death. Thus *Evangelium vitae* adopts an "either-or" or "we versus them" approach. Yet at the United Nations, the pope took a very different tack. The answer to fear about the future is "neither coercion nor repression, nor the imposition of one social 'model' on the entire world. The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end



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of the twentieth century is the common effort to build the civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty" (n. 18). There is no "we versus them" approach here.

In fact, the culture-of-life versus the culture-of-death approach goes against the central Catholic emphasis on mediation which traditionally distinguishes the Catholic approach to moral methodology by insisting that the divine is mediated in and through the human. Such a theological understanding grounds the traditional Catholic insistence on the natural law, which holds that human reason and human nature are basically good. As a result, human reason reflecting on human nature can arrive at true moral knowledge about what God wants us to do. With this understanding of mediation the Catholic approach does not go immediately and directly to God and God's will but rather to the plan that God placed in human nature and in the world and which human beings can know by their own reason.

- Third, *Veritatis splendor* insists on the universal and the uniform. What it presents is the same for all persons in all places and at all times. The "central theme" of *Veritatis splendor* is "the reaffirmation of the universality and immutability of the moral commandments, particularly those which prohibit always and without exception intrinsically evil acts" (n. 115).

At the United Nations, however, John Paul II was far more open to particularity, differences, and diversity. "The human condition thus finds itself between these two poles—universality and particularity—with a vital tension between them; an inevitable tension, but singularly fruitful if they are lived in a calm and balanced way" (n. 7). "To cut oneself off from the reality of difference—or, worse, to attempt to stamp out that difference—is to cut oneself off from the possibility of sounding the depths of the mystery of human life" (n. 10). Consider what would happen if the above sentence were applied to homosexuality.

- Fourth, *Veritatis splendor* and *Evangelium vitae* both presume that moral truth is easy to find and that the hierarchical magisterium has this truth and proclaims it authoritatively to all others. The entire thrust of *Veritatis splendor* rests on the splendor of truth and that people are "made holy by the 'obedience to the truth' (I Peter 1: 22)" (n. 1). At the root of the present crisis in the church lie "currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth" (n. 4). The encyclical's first chapter tells the story of the rich young man asking Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. "Jesus' conversation with the rich young man continues in a sense in every period of history, including our own....The task of interpreting these prescriptions was entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles and to their successors, with the special assistance of the Spirit of truth: 'He who hears you hears me' (Lk. 10: 16)" (n.25). The church ("the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim. 3: 15) continues the teaching role of Jesus with "the task of authentically interpreting the word of God...entrusted only to those charged with the church's living magisterium whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ" (n. 27).

How different is the understanding of truth and the search for it in the address to the United Nations. "The truth about man [*sic*] is the unchangeable standard by which all cultures are judged; but every culture has something to teach us about one or other dimension of that complex truth. Thus the 'difference' which some find so threatening can, through respectful dialogue, become the source of a deeper understanding of the mystery of human existence" (n. 10).

There can be no doubt that significant differences in approach exist between *Veritatis splendor* as well as *Evangelium vitae* and the 1995 papal address to the United Nations. Significant continuities also exist, but the thrust of this essay is to point out the differences.

How do we explain these two significantly different approaches? One possible explanation lies in a basic difference between personal and social ethics. For example, Catholic social thought has always been willing to tolerate in the social realm evil which it will not in the personal realm. Society needs a statute of limitations, but such a statute does not exist in the personal moral order. However, this difference does not seem to account for the more significant differences between the two approaches in papal moral teaching, especially because the Catholic tradition, while recognizing differences between the two areas, has tended to emphasize the continuities between them.

An important difference in approach and emphasis continues to exist within the total ambit of papal teaching on moral issues.

Perhaps the very nature of the documents under consideration explains the differences. *Veritatis splendor* and *Evangelium vitae* are both, by definition, apologetic documents defending the present teaching against those who disagree with it. The address to the United Nations, on the other hand, speaks to the whole world about the need for human cooperation. Without doubt, these differing genres and audiences had some influence on the different methodologies invoked in the documents. However, I do not think this constitutes the total or the most basic explanation for the differences.

In my judgment a primary difference between the two comes from the fact that, in general, social teachings employ a more historically conscious approach than the teachings on sexual and personal morality, which employ a more classicist approach. The classicist approach tends to stress the eternal, immutable, and unchanging, and adopts a more deductive methodology; the historically conscious approach

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gives greater emphasis to change, development, and historical differences while employing a more inductive approach. The four differences I noted in contrasting the encylicals with the UN address can be explained in great measure by these two different methodological approaches.

Everyone recognizes there has been change in hierarchical and papal social teaching over the last hundred years. Nineteenth-century papal teaching strongly condemned individualistic liberalism, the Enlightenment, and democracy. In the twentieth century, the growth of totalitarianism of the Right and, especially, of the Left, brought papal teaching to defend the dignity, freedom, and rights of the person. This did not mean that papal and hierarchical teaching no longer had some problems with individualism or the Enlightenment. Only in the 1940s did Pius XII recognize democracy as the best form of government. Only in 1963 did John XXIII develop a systematic Catholic understanding of human rights. Only in 1965 did Vatican II accept religious freedom. These three represent a significant change in hierarchical social teaching.

Corresponding to these changes, papal and episcopal documents adopted a more historically conscious approach that begins with the concrete historical realities and not with abstract definitions or essences that are always and everywhere true. Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* begins its discussion of five different areas of social morality with a consideration of the signs of the times. Paul VI's *Octogesima adveniens* (1971) adopts a very historically conscious approach: "In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission" (n. 4). His pre-Vatican II predecessors would not recognize themselves in that description.

Vatican II itself employed a historically conscious hermeneutic to justify change in church teaching. In many ways the primary issue in the council's debate about religious liberty was the change that had obviously occurred in church teaching. The problem was solved by invoking a historically conscious hermeneutic, that is, the historical circumstances changed and so the teaching on religious freedom has changed.

Over time some significant developments have occurred in the area of sexual and personal morality. For example, at one time marital sexual relations required that a couple intend procreation to avoid mortal sin. With the development and acceptance of rhythm and natural family planning, married couples could intend not to procreate and still have moral sexual relations. However, the emphasis in recent papal teaching has been on the immutable nature of sexual and personal morality. Such an emphasis by definition opposes the historically conscious methodology which now characterizes contemporary papal social teaching.

One final point. The invocation of an historically conscious hermeneutic to explain the change in the church's teaching on religious freedom was not and is not adequate. There had to have been some error involved at least at some time in the official teaching. Even Vatican II was unwilling to explicitly admit error in past church teaching. If it had, Catholicism might have developed quite differently over the past thirty years. Consider the case of artificial contraception. Paul VI took this issue out of the council (where it might have been solved in a different way) and reaffirmed the ban on artificial contraception in *Humanae vitae* primarily because he could not accept the inference necessarily to be drawn from any change that the past teaching was in any way erroneous.

My point is that different methodological approaches exist in papal teaching on social and personal morality. I have tried to explain why this has occurred. To explore the implications of these differences would require not only another article but at least a volume or two. Many of my own writings in moral theology attempt to deal with these implications.

These different methodological approaches raise problems of consistency and coherency for papal moral teaching. A more historically conscious approach with all that that entails should also be employed in personal and sexual morality. Even so, such an approach would by no means exclude the existence of some absolute moral norms (for example, unjustified killing of human beings, adultery) and very significant continuities in the teachings. But it would call for the recognition that certitude and truth are much harder to come by on specific moral issues. □

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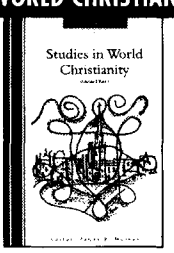

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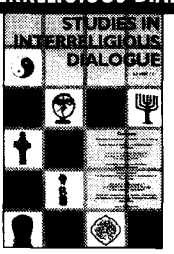

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SERVING THE SMELLY POOR

A luxury one should embrace

Heather King

I recently read Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and what struck the deepest chord wasn't Ivan's fierce hatred of evil, or Alyosha's unflagging goodness, or the cruel death of little Ilusha. No, the passage where I really thought, "That's me" was spoken by an acquaintance of Father Zossima's, a doctor, "a man getting on in years, and undoubtedly clever":

> The more I love humanity in general the less I love man in particular. In my dreams, I often make plans for the service of humanity, and perhaps I might actually face crucifixion if it were suddenly necessary. Yet I am incapable of living in the same room with anyone for two days together. I know from experience. As soon as anyone is near me, his personality disturbs me and restricts my freedom. In twenty-four hours I begin to hate the best of men: one because he's too long over his dinner, another because he has a cold and keeps on blowing his nose. I become hostile to people the moment they come close to me. But it has always happened that the more I hate men individually the more I love humanity.

I experienced this precise reaction myself when a fellow parishioner recently interrupted my pre-Mass prayer for the prisoners on death row by asking me to move so he could reach his seat. The nerve, bothering me, when there were other, empty pews! The crass insensibility, the swinish lack of consideration, the vulgar, ill-bred boor! I could almost have killed him.

That is why, one morning a week, I work on Skid Row, at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker soup kitchen: not because I love mankind so much, but because I don't. Everything about it goes against my grain: it's not the work itself I mind, but teamwork, taking directions, small talk with strangers, the whole unfamiliar situation in which I'm expected, on some level, to "perform."

That's how I felt at first anyway. The fact is I didn't quite know what to expect and that always makes me nervous. I'd read Dorothy Day's *Loaves and Fishes*, but I had no idea what Catholic Workers were like in the flesh. Would they reject me since I still paid income tax, I wondered, or despise me because I owned a car? I mentally spruced up my spiritual *curriculum vitae*—which consists of about two lines—just in case somebody asked, and imagined long, desultory conversations over the stove. What happened instead was I got a big, open-armed welcome and in about two minutes they had me buttering bread and chopping celery so fast my head swam.

Getting personal information out of them at all was like pulling hen's teeth. I once asked Jeff, a twenty-five year veteran of the Worker, how he was doing. "Everything's going great!" he said, "can't complain, same old-same old." The next day I read in their newspaper, the *Catholic Agitator*, that he'd just finished a three-week fast in federal prison after having been arrested for cutting the fence at a Nevada nuclear testing site.

The kitchen itself is light and airy and Catherine, Jeff's wife and another twenty-five year member, has transformed the courtyard into a gracious garden bower that would put the Junior League to shame. There are picnic tables shaded by flowering trees, a gently splashing fountain, a huge birdcage of warbling parakeets. I soon figured out that Catholic Workers were way too busy serving the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and caring for the dying in hospice—all in return for a weekly allowance of ten dollars apiece—to care whether I'd pulled up in a Rolls-Royce or walked.

My main job is serving salad, one long-handled serving spoonful per plate, and it's amazing how many variations on this simple theme our guests, as we call them, manage to come up with. One likes it dry from the top of the tub, one runny from the bottom; they want it with extra tomatoes, no cabbage, on a separate plate, mixed with the beans, an extra serving, an extra-small serving. "Special orders don't

"I tried living a lie—that didn't work either."

Heather King *is a free-lance writer living in Los Angeles. She wrote "One Woman's Journey"* Commonweal, *(May 3, 1996).*

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upset US!" I exclaim, and Bob, a fellow volunteer who dishes up beans, murmurs, "Funny, I always heard beggars couldn't be choosers...."

Once the line starts rolling at 9:30 in the morning, a raucous pageant begins, the contestants as different as snowflakes. It's a jubilee, for instance, of hair: masses of hair clotted like the roots of potbound plants, snake-thick dreadlocks, flaming hennaed aureolas, hair the texture of fiberglass insulation, hair with swirls and dips and glides enough to ski on, an Afro rioting two feet off its owner's head with a little white hankie draped on top, like a napkin on a bowl of fruit. There are fingernails as ridged and irregular as oyster shells, nails as thick and horny as the hooves on a horse; teeth like cracked corn, curved like tusks, long as piano keys, and lower gums with only two teeth left, one at each end, like goalposts. A tattoo in spidery cursive script trailing across the side of a man's neck, reads, "I'm your puppet," and others, of naked women and Madonnas, are so inexpertly done they look like they were outlined with icepicks.

I worked in a law office for four years without ever making direct eye contact with a co-worker. Here at the kitchen, they let me look at them and, across the pot of beans, the bin of salad, the basket of bread, I let them look at me. In the course of a morning, I look into hundreds of pairs of eyes, say hey, what's up, garbanzos today! There you go, careful now, it's hot! Good morning! What's so fucking good about it? some of them ask.

A sort of hypnotic rhythm sets in as the cardboard plates, white as hosts, are passed hand over hand, one by one, minute after minute for two-and-a-half hours as the line keeps coming on strong. By 11 o'clock, our backs ache from standing in one spot on the concrete floor. "Cripples for Christ!" I joke, with a nudge to Bob. "He keeps me runnin'!" Bob replies. Me, too, I think, though I'm not quite sure where.

For a while, I reveled in the starry-eyed realization that we weren't serving the poor, they were serving us! And while that is true on some level—in the sense that we, the servers, "get" something out of our work—the fact is that nothing could be clearer than that we are serving them and that most of them couldn't serve us even if they wanted to, and it's a pretty good bet they don't. We have relatively pleasing personalities, clothes that fit, sound teeth. Our fingernails are clipped, our hair is cut, our zippers zip. We have things to put on a résumé and we have all our limbs. We wear both shoes.

What perhaps sheds more light than trying to figure out who is serving whom, is to recognize that we are all, in our own ways, looking for help. It may be simplistic to say that they are asking for food for their bodies, while we are seeking food for our souls. But to gloss over the distinction is to deny the difference between poverty—the grinding, crushing kind of poverty, imposed by our collective greed, that condemns people to expend every ounce of physical and psychic energy on locating the basic necessities of life—and the "voluntary" poverty espoused by Dorothy Day, ironically a kind of luxury open only to those for whom those basic necessities, by the grace of God, have already been fulfilled.

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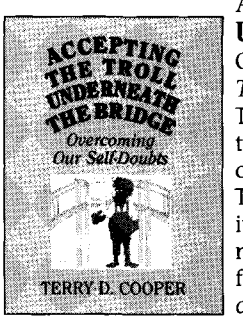

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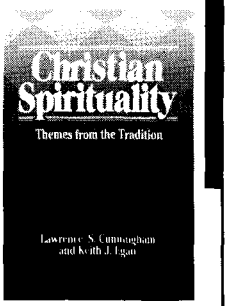

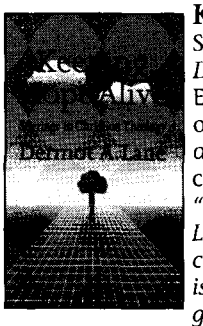

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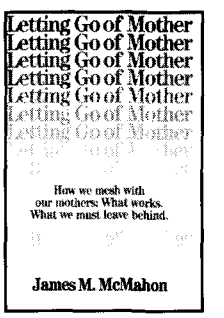

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Nancy G. Westerfield

Emily Dickinson Taking the Train

Not the Erie-Lackawanna Route of Phoebe
Snow, although this morning she is dressed
For it, in Phoebe's white, wearing white
For the way she sees herself in her own journey,
Preserving the innocence of Eve against
All blandishments of Edens and Adams,
Preserving the innocence of words, giving
Virgin birth to them, nursing them each
Sparingly, sparingly. Relentlessly, the rails
Beneath her rhyme, in couplings like her own
Quatrains, but sing-songing their iron caesuras,
Unbroken by assonance. As relentlessly as the pea
Beneath twelve mattresses that troubled the dreams
Of the sleeping princess, the ballasted roadbed
Stones her poems; the sharpened scissors of rails
Shear away beneath her the sanctuary of home,
Pair distance and desire dangerously, divide
Her phrases with dashes, disjoint her lines.
Journey's end: The pointed blades of the rails
That scissored day, now pierce the night,
Have pierced one passenger, descending
At Amherst in soot-dappled white.

One woman's shirt is so lowcut her nipples show; the next is swaddled in blankets, her feet wrapped in filthy strips of unraveling cloth, like the shoes a mummy would wear. A T-shirt reads "At my age, sex is the last thing on my mind. It's the first thing, too." One man in particular looked "normal," until I saw him featured in a newspaper article about welfare cuts and discovered he is schizophrenic and has fourteen dollars a month in spending money, most of which goes for soap to assuage a disorder that compels him to obsessively launder his clothes.

Some of them never shut up and some of them won't talk at all. Some of them sing, some of them read, some say, "Lord be saved!" The part I like best is that some of them stink, and not the polite sweat you or I might work up after a brisk jog, either: these are the kind of unequivocal smells that conjure up caves and swamps and outdoor latrines. Some of them have breath like the ripe, moldy air from unplugged refrigerators; across the counter drift odors, penetrating as menthol, that should be emanating from the undersides of wide, scrofulous wings instead of the shirts of human beings.

But while it looks to be clear that our side is a blessing, and theirs is a curse, sometimes you have to wonder. I think of the snowy-white shirts my boss used to wear—his tailor came to the office every so often to fit him—with a raised white monogram over the breast pocket, thick, starched cuffs and heavy gold cuff links of crossed golf clubs; his small plump hands, smooth as a girl's, the nails protected with a gloss of clear polish. At least I think those were his hands: the bespoke shirts and the manicured hands, the silk ties and Italian loafers and the Infiniti—or was it a Lexus?—blend together with all the other hundred-dollar haircuts and Bally briefcases and Mont Blanc pens of all the other indistinguishable lawyers, the indistinguishable eyes with all the warmth of a combination lock, the sweat bred out of their pores until they smelled as bland and inoffensive as a plastic credit card.

That job constituted a kind of death that was as terrifying, in its way, as the prospect of starvation, and it is a measure of my own cowardice to say that quitting it—giving up the money—was the bravest thing I've ever done. My faith is so puny I imagined ending up a bag lady, one of those people I can love from a distance, out of pity, but after an hour bore and annoy me: one of those people on whose plate, come Thursday morning, I heap a mound of salad.

"But what can be done? What can one do in such a case? Must one despair?" asks Dostoevsky's doctor.

"No. It is enough that you are distressed. Do what you can and it will be reckoned unto you," replies Father Zossima.

What I do now is teeter between two worlds. I quit the job, but I kept my mutual funds. I do freelance work for a "public interest" lawyer, but it's still litigation, and in many ways as lying and corrupt as corporate work. It's relatively easy to love political prisoners; it's easy, even, to love their torturers from my sterile, safe remove. But what I really need to do is learn to love the people I see each day: my husband, the man who asks me to move while I'm praying, that ex-boss with his ritzy cufflinks who, when he said I wore my heart on my sleeve, meant it as a slur.

Of my own accord, I cannot stop judging and compartmentalizing and comparing. It seems impossible that I will ever go from where I am now to where I want to be, just as it seems impossible—the attempt a kind of folly—to staunch the flow of these hungry mouths that will only wake up hungry again tomorrow, hungry forever, legions of hungry mouths and broken bodies and diseased minds and tortured souls on the march, in every state in this country, in every country of the globe. Still, do what you can, the priest says. What I can do is write and help to feed this particular line, ever-advancing, as alive and irrepressible as yeast. I keep peering into their eyes, looking for answers.

I haven't gotten any yet; I only know that Christ is here. I am here not because it will make a difference, but because it very well may not. I am here because Christ said, as you have done unto the least of these brothers of mine, so have you done unto me. I am here because every so often, beneath the white plates, one of my fingers touches one of theirs. □

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Frank McConnell

'GENESIS'

PBS does a mitzvah

"Turn it and turn it, for there is everything in it." That's what the (probably) mythical and (certainly) wonderfully named Rabbi Ben Bag Bag is quoted in Talmud as saying about the study of Torah, which is the Law, which is the first five books of the Tanak, which is what Christians call the "Old" Testament, and which—along with the works of Plato and a couple of plays of Sophocles—is the iron architecture, the psychic DNA, of the Western idea of the self. There is no appeal from this judgment. If you are a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim, or even a heretic or atheist or looney-tune cultist, as long as you exist in Western culture you live and think under the all-but-unbearable weight of this uncanny, inescapable text. Somebody once said brilliantly that every saxophone player after Charlie Parker was a witness to his genius, because the only possible choices were to choose to sound like Bird, or—perhaps even greater bondage—to choose *not* to sound like Bird. Multiplied a thousandfold, that is the pressure of Torah.

Turn it and turn it, for there is everything in it. Ben Bag Bag's counsel is the very heart of the tradition of rabbinic biblical commentary and interpretation, or Midrash. And therefore it is also the heart of all Christian exegesis, from Augustine to Luther to Karl Barth or Karl Rahner: reading Augustine's commentaries on Genesis, you cannot escape the conclusion that you are reading an especially heterodox, and therefore, delightful Midrash. There can at this point be little doubt that the Christian world learned to read Scripture—learned to read altogether—from the heroic and still ongoing labor of the rabbis. Nor can there be any doubt that, as Harold Bloom observes in *Omens of Millennium* (Riverhead), "One of the many unhappy oddities of the contemporary United States is that so many of us are Bible-obsessed yet have never read the Bible."

That's why the Gideon Society, founded in Wisconsin in 1898, seems to me such a noble and peculiarly American enterprise. To put Bibles in every hotel room in the country; to replace them when they're stolen—that is a *mitzvah*, a very good deed.

And that's also why the PBS series, "Genesis: A Living Conversation," premiering October 16, is also a *mitzvah*—although not an unmixed one.

"Genesis" is a ten-part series of conversations with Bill Moyers, Moyers being by now highbrow TV's Johnny Carson, that is, the perfect and perfectly bland host against whose solid edifice of incomprehension better minds can rebound their best shots: it's a distinct talent. He is also, as the publicity packet for the show emphasizes, a former divinity student, and the producer of myriad PBS shows exploring the "world of ideas." What better guy to host a series introducing, Gideon-wise, the first book of the book of books to a nation not of traveling salesmen, but of armchair travelers, accidental tourists on the information superhighway?

As my great teacher, Judah Goldin, was fond of saying, the sense of Midrash, like the sense of Talmudic commentary, is that of an ongoing, endless, exhilarating conversation about an inexhaustible tale. (This, by the way, is what secular literary criticism also ought to be, but almost never is.) And in this respect, "Genesis" comes beautifully close to the rabbinical or exegetical ideal.

Each program focuses on a particular episode from Genesis. In order of presentation they are: Cain and Abel; the first creation story; the temptation in the garden; Noah and the Flood; Abraham and Sarah in Egypt; Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael; the *akedah*, the sacrifice of Isaac; Jacob conning his way into the birthright; Jacob's wrestling match with the "angel," where he wins the name, Israel; and Joseph's exile and triumph in Egypt. Those are certainly the stories most people know—or think they know—from the book. At the beginning of each episode, a storyteller, either Alfre Woodard or Mandy Patinkin, narrates the tale. Then Moyers and seven other people—writers, rabbis, ministers, priests, feminists, near-fundamentalists, painters, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus—have I missed anybody?—sit around and talk about the story. That's right: just talk.

It's a risky plan: these are not the controlled one-on-one conversations—lectures, actually—that Moyers had with Huston Smith or Joseph Campbell in previous series. This actually *is* conversation, verbal tennis with no net and no outlines, and it can veer, as does Midrash, at any moment into the sublime or the absurd. In fact, as I watched the first

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show—the one about Cain and Abel—my instant reaction was that this was one of the silliest and most self-congratulating damn things I'd ever seen on TV—and I'm a guy who has actually watched "Wheel of Fortune." "Mass-produced feel-good glop," I snorted to my wife after the first half-hour (although I didn't really say "glop"): "this is McMidrash."

Nor was I altogether wrong. I'll get around to talking about the annoying lapses of the series eventually. But what needs to be said first, and loudly, is that it all, after all, *works*.

And it works mainly because—I can't say this too often—it's actual conversation. Think about how weird that is for TV. The "talk" shows, of course, are little more than shouting machines—like being raised, I guess, in an alcoholic household; the news shows are instructive to the degree that they indicate how pathetically incapable anyone in national politics is of conveying human information at all; and the pundit shows ("McLaughlin Group," "Brinkley," etc.) are elaborately stylized dances of clashing egos, as finally boring as the mating dances of cranes or the tango. But these folks really *talk*—just as the rabbis or the *amoraim* (the writers of Talmud) do—and they talk about specific things: *what* does the serpent mean in the story of the Fall; *why* does Abraham in Egypt tell Sarah to pretend to be his sister; *how* could God play the savage trick on Abraham of asking him to sacrifice his only son Isaac? And so on and so on. And some very stupid things are said, and some very lovely things are said. (My heart leapt when Burton L. Visotzky, arguing with a Christian apologist about the arbitrariness and injustice of the Flood, said, "I have to believe that God is large enough to contain my anger"; that is good enough to have come from Hillel or the great Akiba.) The point is that it is talk, real talk, by a total of thirty-nine participants, about things that really matter—or the Thing that Really Matters—and as such a living proof that human discourse survives even in the medium, of all media, that seems most designed to obliterate it. I have never been a fan of Bill Moyers. But for this series, he deserves a large measure of gratitude. In my next column, I will do some criticizing. □

In conjunction with "Genesis," Doubleday has published a resource guide for discussion groups, Talking about Genesis *($5.95, 177 pp.). The manual will help viewers to grapple with the Genesis stories in local discussion groups, rather than simply watching others talk on the tube. The aim is to assist them in drawing together text, interpretation, and their own experience, and to create an atmosphere that fosters mutual exploration.*

The guide follows the ten-segment sequence of the PBS series; enhances it with short essays by Cynthia Ozick, Jack Miles, Mary Gordon, Everett Fox, and Walter Bruegemann, among others; provides outreach resources; and if the discussion should falter, offers a selection of quotes that should revive any group's interest: "To err is human—it only feels divine" (Mae West); "When you come to a fork in the road, take it" (attributed to Yogi Berra).

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Dance, dance, wherever you may be

Keeping Together in Time
Dance and Drill in Human History
William H. McNeill
Harvard University Press, $22, 198 pp.

Robert N. Bellah

William McNeill has become something of a national treasure. His principal work, *The Rise of the West*, put comparative history on the map. In subsequent treatises, *The Pursuit of Power* and *Plagues and Peoples*, he has shown how changes in military technology and the spread of infectious disease have altered the course of history. In recent years he has turned to extended essays to raise very large questions about the shape of history, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* and *The Global Condition: Conquerors, Catastrophes, and Community* being examples. It is in this latter genre that he has produced the book being here reviewed, nothing less than a survey of the historical impact of shared rhythmic motion from the paleolithic to the present, an impact that he finds surprisingly significant.

It may be somewhat unnerving for readers of this magazine that the two places where what McNeill calls "muscular bonding" have been most central have been religion and the military. When I point out in a talk that the two institutions in which Americans currently express the greatest confidence are the military and the church, this news is usually received with nervous laughter. Even knowing that, I was not quite prepared to learn, as I did in the recent spate of publicity about him, that not only was Colin Powell raised an Episcopalian, but that his service as an altar boy prepared him psychologically for a career in the army. Again the proximity of Episcopal liturgy and military life, while making a certain amount of sense, was not something I would spontaneously have imagined. McNeill does a great deal to clarify this otherwise disconcerting conjuncture.

McNeill's starting point is frankly autobiographical: how did it happen that as a draftee in 1941, while enduring basic training in a camp on the barren plains of Texas, he actually enjoyed the hours spent in close-order drill? His answer in his admittedly somewhat speculative history of keeping together in time (after all who bothered much to write about such things) is that "moving our muscles rhythmically and giving voice consolidate group solidarity by altering human feelings."

From this small beginning McNeill draws large conclusions. Noting that none of the other primates seem to have the capacity to keep together in time, he believes that the earliest humans, probably well before fully developed language, were able to establish extended bonds of solidarity through the capacity for shared rhythmic movement. This extended solidarity enabled *Homo erectus* more than a million years ago to enlarge its territory to include most of the old world, signaling the emergence of a very different sort of primate indeed.

McNeill does not at all want to minimize the importance of the achievement of full linguisticality, subsequent to the appearance of *Homo sapiens*, which apparently lies behind the cultural explosion that began some forty thousand years ago and has not stopped since, but he believes that the use of fully grammatical language added to but did not displace the powerful social significance of shared rhythmic motion.

Virtually all small communities of which we have knowledge, whether tribal or peasant, have been united on significant occasions by community-wide singing and dancing, usually more or less explicitly religious in content. (McNeill points out that what we today usually mean by "dancing," namely paired cross-gender performances with some degree of sexual intent, is, when viewed historically, aberrant to the point of being pathological.) Though never mentioning Durkheim, McNeill here affirms the thesis of his most important work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, in which Durkheim argues that re-

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ligious beliefs are inseparable from, and derive much of their capacity for creating social solidarity from, shared ritual practice.

But McNeill moves beyond Durkheim in noting that in complex societies divided by social class muscular bonding may be the medium through which discontented and oppressed groups can gain the solidarity necessary for challenging the existing social order, using early prophetism in Israel as an example. He puts in perspective something that has often been noticed, namely that the liturgical movements of the more advantaged members of society are apt to be relatively sedate, whereas those of the dispossessed can become energetic to the point of inducing trance.

Close-order drill, MacNeill's starting point, turns out to have emerged in only a few rather special circumstances, although dancing in preparation for or celebration after military exploits is widespread in simple societies. Here again there are ambiguities. Intensive drill in the Greek phalanx or trireme provided the social cohesion and sense of self-respect that reinforced citizenship in the ancient *polis*, but in early modern Europe its meaning was more ambiguous, sometimes reinforcing citizenship, sometimes absolutism. McNeill gives the interesting example of the strongly-bonded citizen armies of the French Revolution that then turned out to be manipulable elements in the establishment of Napoleon's autocracy. His comments on the use of rhythmic motion, derived in part from military drill but in part from calisthenics, in the creation of modern nationalism, culminating in Hitler's mass demonstrations (inspired in part by the mass socialist parades on May Day, which in turn were inspired in part by Corpus Christi celebrations) are suggestive of why moving together in time has fallen in disrepute in much of the Western world. Yet McNeill is probably right in arguing that the virtual elimination of solidary rural communities, which provided most of the urban as well as rural population of the world until the last few generations, creates a major deficiency in all modern societies leading to the breakdown of even elementary social cohesion.

Perhaps this brings us back to why the military and the church are the two most highly respected institutions in America today. Here are two institutions that provide the stability of shared rhythms, (relatively) impervious to the disturbing chatter of critical reason. And that of course is just what makes so many secular intellectuals nervous about both of them. But do we really have a choice? Can the triumph of critical reason avoid self-destruction without coming to terms with the deep prelinguistic nature of human existence?

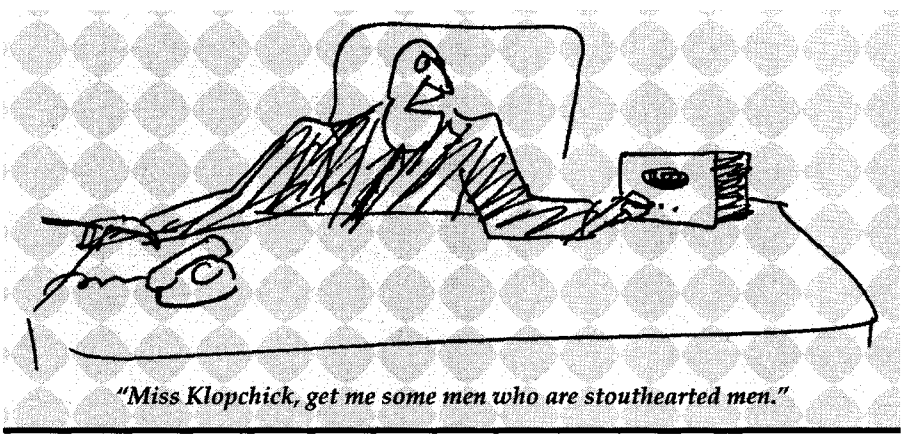
It is just here that I found an article in the May/June 1996 *Harvard Magazine* that helps in understanding McNeill's thesis. Pat C. Hoy II, the author of the article "Soldiers and Scholars," tells of coming to Harvard to teach writing after retiring from many years of teaching at West Point. In Cambridge he found "intoxicating freedom" and the excitement of intense intellectual exchange between students and faculty. Yet he also found something missing that he had taken for granted at West Point: "The army's sublime work is done in concert, individuals so synchronized in their individual efforts that they seemed graced....Few watch soldiers on parade or at work without feeling the seductive rhythms of their concerted efforts." At Harvard, beside the excitement and the freedom, he found isolation and despair, the lack of the "enabling hierarchies" that could provide support for those on the verge of a free fall into a personal abyss.

And he recalled an experience he had had in Vietnam where he had come in by helicopter after a successful battle and observed what the soldiers were doing:

> My work had been done long before the battle, and satisfaction came to me privately as I stood watching those soldiers recover through the saving rituals they performed together—burying the dead, policing the battlefield, stacking ammunition, burning leftover powder bags, hauling trash, shaving, drinking coffee, washing, talking as they restored order and looked out for one another's welfare. They were bound up in the throngs of community, and that communal satisfaction was its own pure reward.

But he cannot but feel that his memory is "tainted" by a war that will never end because we cannot assimilate it to any idea that would make moral sense of it. The failure of the Vietnam War was not a failure of the rhythms and rituals of the army but the failure of a political idea. And here I want to push just a bit beyond Hoy. Where did that failure of a political idea come from? Not West Point, but Harvard. Not muscular bonding, but critical reason.

If keeping together in time can be put to terrible use, as it certainly has many times, so can and has critical reason. We are not faced here with an either/or: we need to find the right way to bring them together. When we kneel or stand or sing together we are potentially providing the coherence without which critical reason will surely tear us to pieces. □



"Miss Klopchick, get me some men who are stouthearted men."

Robert N. Bellah *is Elliott Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.*

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The Woman Who Walked into Doors
Roddy Doyle
Viking, $22.95, 226 pp.

Suzanne Keen

I have read each of Roddy Doyle's novels (*The Commitments* [1988], *The Snapper* [1990], *The Van* [1991], and *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* [1993]) with increasing enjoyment and admiration, so it is with real disappointment that I must report that in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Doyle reaches the limits of his technique.

The topic of the novel commands the reader's attention: thirty-nine-year-old Paula Spencer, a working-class Irishwoman, recalls as much as she can about eighteen years of abuse at the hands of her husband Charlo. Doyle does not make Paula a cut-out martyr: she struggles with alcoholism; she continues to find her brutal spouse sexually attractive despite his repeated attacks on her. Doyle indicts the doctors, nurses, neighbors, and family members who accept Paula's lame excuses, the "walking into doors" of the title, but he does not entirely exonerate his protagonist of a dangerous reticence. Indeed, the reader may wonder why it takes her so long to pick up the frying pan. The somewhat sensational fate of Charlo, killed by the police as he ineffectually flees a murder-scene, Doyle handles without melodrama. Yet the deliberately disordered storytelling, jumbled up to mimic Paula's patchy memory, the repetitions, and the unvaried rhythm of the prose make a novel that ought to be riveting into a boring book. I find it strange to be bored by a novel about pain, especially since the story Doyle tells contributes to the exposure of the scandalous epidemic of violence against women.

Paula's voice, in which the entire novel is related, combines convincing staccato storytelling, slangy working-class diction, frank revelations, and agonized reconstruction of the past in sometimes profane and often touching tones. Here Paula remembers her teenaged self, both attracted and repelled by the man she will so disastrously marry:

> He was a *ride*. It was the best way to describe him, from the first time I heard of him to the last time I saw him. He wasn't gorgeous. There was never anything gorgeous about him. When we made love the first time in the field when we were drunk, especially me, and I didn't really know what was happening, only his weight and wanting to get sick; I felt terrible after it, scared and soggy, guilty and sore. It would have helped if he'd been gorgeous, like Robert Redford or Lee Majors. They'd have picked me up and carried me home; they wouldn't have fucked me in a field in the first place, not one of the fields where I came from that weren't really fields at all, just bits left over after the building was finished. Charlo stood up.
>
> —Fuckin' cold.

I do not doubt the authenticity of this voice, and I admire the evocation of poverty not only in the setting—the leftover fields—and in the man's callous remark, but in the woman's denuded vocabulary of desire: he's a "ride," he's not "gorgeous." In the ensuing sections Doyle succeeds in showing the gradual increase in Paula's realism about her husband, as she ceases to "make him nice" retroactively. The terse concluding remarks of the novel, after Paula has finally driven Charlo out of the house, represent a triumph: "It was a great feeling. I'd done something good."

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SUMMER 1997

Perhaps because for the first time in this novel Doyle limits himself to a woman's perspective, critics have celebrated his taking "a daring step in a new direction," as the publicity for the novel cheers. (Doyle's success with a woman's voice will not surprise readers who recall the pungent utterances of Sharon in *The Barrytown Trilogy*.) Yet I think that in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* Doyle takes his customary radical limitation of perspective in a rather more predictable direction, one that ultimately hinders the effect of the book. Doyle's early novels rely very heavily on pure scene, in which dialogue rather than inner thoughts dominates. *The Commitments* reads almost like a screenplay. (Perhaps for this reason it is an example of that rare phenomenon, a novel improved by being rendered in film—in Alan Parker's 1991 movie of the same title.) The Booker Prize-winning novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* explores with remarkable subtlety the development of a small boy's interiority and empathy, as he simultaneously masters language and discovers a new understanding of pain. Paddy's experience of pain becomes more complex as the inevitable break-up of his parents grows nearer, and he gains the capacity to imagine, rather than simply enjoy what he calls "the crunch of someone else's pain." A turning point in the novel occurs when Paddy overhears his father slapping his mother; that single offstage blow oddly seems more painful to this reader than the horrific catalog of injuries in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. In *Paddy Clarke*, the rigorous confinement of the fiction to the child's mind and voice works because he is both victim and witness, and because the reader can always see a bit more rapidly than he does what the signs and portents Paddy records really mean. This gives the novel a sense of foreboding that *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* entirely lacks.

Paula Spencer is a trickier kind of witness: one who has blacked out and been knocked unconscious too often to tell her story "straight." Unlike Paddy Clarke, she has no special affinity for language. That limitation of perspective means that we cannot see what the doctors, nurses, and relatives see, or fail to register. Further, it means that Charlo remains just as much a cipher to us as he is to his wife, who, after battering him with a frying pan, still registers his charms: "His hair hung over his face and for a second he looked funny and lovely."

The impoverished explanation for Paula's over-long patience with her abuser is twinned in the novel by a complete lack of interest in Charlo's motivations. All we know is that he's great in the sack (he improves after that first encounter in the fields), that he drinks, and that he comes from an abusive family himself. Though these bare facts may agree with the sociological picture of an abuser, they do little to augment Doyle's detailed choreography of the method of Charlo's beatings. He hits her. He hits her and kicks her. He hits her and knocks her teeth out. And so forth. The resulting monotony of action poses a narrative problem that I had

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always imagined was particular to what my dad calls "shattering-glass epic" movies. They've crashed the elevator, and escaped the bus, so now they have to wreck a subway train! The repetition of action demands an escalation that is distasteful, in this case, to desire. Because Doyle lets us know from the start that Charlo has died, and because he takes care to present his characters and their worsening situation without any glamour, his readers are left with a relatively simple story portraying a victim. Nothing wrong with that. I believed in Paula the imaginary human being enough to feel appalled for her. But as Elaine Scarry observes in *The Body in Pain*, pain obliterates language. The paucity of Paula's language, a direct consequence of Doyle's rigorous technique, ultimately makes her story tedious to read. □

Suzanne Keen, *a frequent* Commonweal *contributor, teaches English at Washington and Lee University.*

WHERE THE STRESS LIES

Auden
Richard Davenport-Hines
Pantheon, $30, 406 pp.

Celia Wren

The poetry of Wystan Hugh Auden impresses itself on the mind before it does so on the ear. Weighty ideas about history and human nature, bearing down on the words, seem to have worn off the usual verbal varnish: syntax can seem unwieldy, or imagery oddly juxtaposed, or rhymes too easy, as though they were meant sarcastically (take for example the lines from his sonnet sequence "In Time of War:" "And strangers were as brothers to his clocks,/And with his spires he made a human sky;/Museums stored his learning like a box,/And paper watched his money like a spy.") Subjects seem unrooted, drifting among vague mysterious energies. Lines draw their power from the ideas beneath them.

Replying in the late '60s to criticism that a poem of his was prosaic, Auden wrote: "In so much 'serious' poetry I find an element of 'theatre,' of exaggerated gesture and fuss....I want [the reader's] reaction to be: 'That's true,' or better still, 'That's true: now, why didn't I think of it for myself?' To secure this effect I am prepared to sacrifice a great many poetic pleasures and excitements."

Thrifty with clarity as well as poetic excitements, Auden's poems can seem at least abstract, if not, as Anthony Hecht once put it, "Orphic and obscure." But to Auden they were true, and when his ideas of truth changed, he sometimes revised early poems, heedless of protests from devotees.

By concentrating on the ideas Auden moved between and through, rather than on minute biographical details, Richard Davenport-Hines gives his book a hint of Audenesque mystery. As he acknowledges in an afterword, he has not tried to write a definitive biography: Humphrey Carpenter's 1981 *W. H. Auden* left Davenport-Hines "free to write a biography that is more thematic, or selectively emphatic."

His choice has been to do an interpretive reading of Auden's life and work, dwelling on the ideas that preoccupied the poet at various times: his stoicism about suffering and his conviction that the glory of human love lay in its imperfections, his interest in Freudianism, his cynicism about civilization, his fleeting visions of utopias, and his rediscovery of Christianity when he was in his thirties. Davenport-Hines weaves this intellectual chronicle into the account of the poet's life, quoting amply from

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Auden's prose as well as from his poetry.

The portrait he draws is of a brilliant intellectual with a gift for philosophizing, a keen sensitivity to history, and a commitment to his craft that made him exasperatingly self-centered. Throughout his life Auden demonstrated a contrarian and even curmudgeonly streak that led him to state, in the 1950s, that "Alienation from the collective is always a duty." Born in York, England, in 1907, he discovered his homosexuality at a young age and began to rebel against the inhibited mood of the times at just about the same time as he was dazzling his contemporaries at Oxford.

When his father volunteered to finance a year in Europe, Auden chose Berlin because the risqué delights of Paris were already a cliché. He did try to be useful in Spain during the Civil War ("As I have no dependents, I feel I ought to go;" he wrote, "but O I do hope there are not too many Surrealists there") but he soon regretted his poem "Spain" with its militant refrain "But today the struggle." In 1938, after a trip to China with Christopher Isherwood, he renounced overt political activity, a move that alienated many idealistic contemporaries. From henceforth he was to believe that art could not change the world;

as he put it in his elegy "In Memory of W. B. Yeats": "poetry makes nothing happen."

In 1939 he emigrated to the United States, and later became an American citizen, apparently because he found British literary society too claustrophobic. Shortly after the move he met the love of his life, Chester Kallman, with whom he was to share credit for a number of opera librettos (including Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*), and several very messy domiciles, in New York, in Greece, and in Austria. Despite infidelities on both sides, the relationship was to continue throughout their lives, though Kallman's neglect contributed substantially to the loneliness of the older poet's final years. Overindulgence in cigarettes, alcohol, and the amphetamine Benzedrine had caused his health to deteriorate, and his increasingly churlish manners had alienated his friends. He died in 1974; Kallman died a few months later.

Davenport-Hines's portrait of the poet is astute and sympathetic, and his extremely sophisticated literary interpretations are almost poetic in their own right: "Auden's shrewdest critics see such different strengths in his work: the honey of intellect and the imperatives of ethical commitment; romanticism; tense passion; and constant, implacable political concern. These readings are not antagonistic: the meaning is most where the interpretations lie thickest."

However, the book's emphasis on concepts rather than facts occasionally gives it a rather cryptic atmosphere; one senses that pictures are incomplete. Readers unfamiliar with Auden's life may find Carpenter's fact-filled (and longer) biography more satisfying. Nonetheless, Davenport-Hines's work, obviously the product of passionate involvement with Auden's writing, contains illuminating analysis, and makes interesting connections between his beliefs and the writings of lesser-known twentieth-century thinkers. And he supplies enough biography to make it clear that Auden fulfilled the aspiration set out in his early poem "September 1, 1939," a poem he later repudiated for not meeting his high standards for "truth":

Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame. □

Celia Wren *is a frequent contributor to* Commonweal.

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THE RICH ARE DIFFERENT

Sky over El Nido
Stories
C. M. Mayo
University of Georgia Press, $22.95, 164 pp.

David Toolan

C. M. Mayo lives in Mexico City, and dedicates this work, a first collection of stories, to her grandfather, Frank R. Mayo, "who knew how to travel the world." Ms. Mayo is a chip off the old block. These thirteen stories span a remarkably variegated set of characters and situations around the world, from upscale jet-setters to the proletariate. The title story gives us the big, sadistic laugh that Argentine jail guards get from prisoners who, forgetting they are about to be tortured or "disappeared," demand maple syrup with their breakfast waffles; and in "What Fish This Fish?" we move to cocktail hour in a nameless African nation, as a fastidious G-7 banker tries to explain to the thug who rules the country, between swatting away malarial mosquitos and a burst of machine gun fire (to shoot a whimpering dog), why 73 percent of the next year's sweet potato crop will have to be exported (balance of payments problems). The moral: little shark eats big shark—the best comment on structural readjustment I've read in years.

Mayo evokes the smells, tastes, and weather of these settings as palpably as she probes the moods of her characters. Place, time, and people thus stick to your ribs long after you've put a story down. The sense of these taut tales—as opposed to their obvious craft and surface polish—then catches up with you, in a kind of delayed reaction. The lasting, deeper meaning, you begin to sense, often lies between the lines, in what is not said.

The first story introduces us to the globetrotting, thrice-married Chabela del Rio y de la Fuente Contreras, who is having trouble getting out of bed this day. (It sounds like this happens often.) "I call my maid: Bring me a cucumber and a knife. On each eyelid, I place a slice of cool." The sybaritic Chabela is ostensibly trying to recollect her (now deceased) mother—the woman who reneged on leaving Chabela those Aubusson carpets she'd promised, the wild wife of the ambassador to the Court of Saint James who, while Hitler's bombs rained down, rushed out into the street in her blue silk bathrobe, "a cigar jammed into the side of her mouth like Mr. Churchill," and rescued (or had she?) three frightened zebras that had escaped from the London zoo. Could that have been her mother, a week before she died, rollerblading through New York's Central Park with a black man, "wearing striped stretch pants and a white sweatshirt that said FREE THE..."? Chabela cannot tell ("I could not read the rest; she disappeared around a bend").

Important things—soulful things—are always disappearing around bends in these elliptical stories, and the haunted searchers of memory often miss the signs—of life, of love, of "ordinary unhappiness" or impending catastrophe. Small or large catastrophes, though, sometimes bring release.

In "The Wedding" you think you're once again privy to the disconnected ruminations of another rich Mexico City matron—who in this case is unaccountably avoiding her granddaughter's wedding Mass. Before you are through, though, Lola is "ready" for something neither she nor the reader expects. There she is, "running across the grass faster than she can remember running in years and years. She is aware of the riffle of the jacaranda's leaves, the smell of yellow-green grass cuttings, of a great empty space beneath her rib cage" as she dives into the swimming pool to save—

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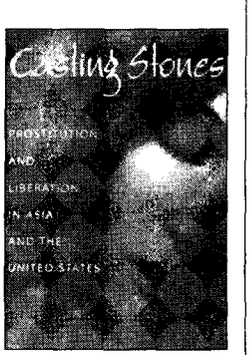

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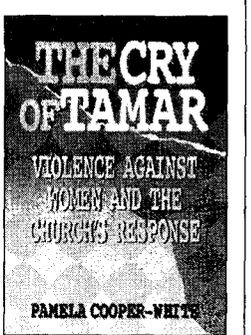

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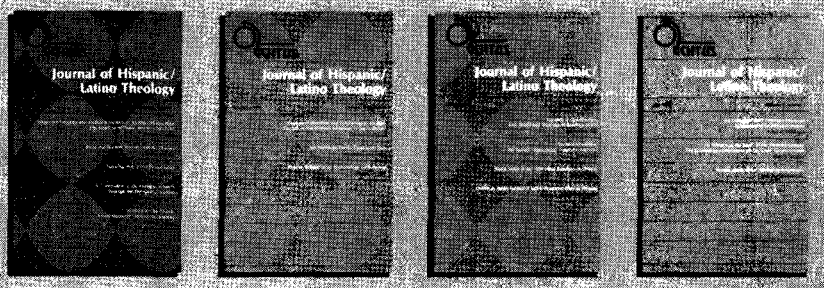

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who? what?—someone she doesn't even know, a maid's drowning child. Her daughter Carmen, she of the perfectly polished, very long nails, will not understand; it will ruin the party.

The plot lines that Mayo's characters imagine they are living, that they (or an omniscient narrator) describe so vividly, frequently aren't to the point. An elusive something else disturbs the air. "I thought I would see another jaguarundi. But I never have, not once in my life," says the now stricken, once love-sick playboy-poet in "The Jaguarundi." In much of this story, he's taking care of his mistress's small, pet jaguar while she's away—living like a monk (with a fat portfolio)—writing unsent poems to her and quietly running through her husband's liquor supply. The rhythm of the reportage exactly captures his growing dedication to the animal (does he love the woman or her cat more?) as well as the emptiness in his strangely austere life. Years later, after living aimlessly in Cairo and Tangiers, the affair with this woman by then a blank, he seeks out the jaguar, then locked up in a zoo behind glass. "I clapped my hands, but the jaguarundi didn't move. Its food dish was covered with flies. I clapped my hands again, louder this time, and its eyes flicked open. The jaguarundi looked at me without moving. Then it yawned...I thought I might tap on the glass, call out its name. But for the life of me I couldn't remember what it was." The piece is utterly haunting.

In "The Third Day," disaster interrupts an ordinary young life on the slopes of Mt. Shasta. Caught in an unexpected blizzard on a cross-country skiing outing, Jane vainly tries to hold onto the safe and well-defined world that she and Bobby left three days ago. She's a travel agent behind a "Formica-top desk with a telephone, a fax, a vase of brilliant paper flowers," she reminds herself as if it were a dream, and Bobby "sells something—computers, or restaurant supplies, or was it bank accounts?" They're lost, their former identities now whited out, dissolved, and what incongruously races through Jane's mind is that moment years ago when she lured a little Mexican boy to leap off a roof (to his death?). It was just a game (what got into her?). And this date with Bobby was to be just a game, too—only as chance would have it, the weather turned, and their map, matches, sunblock, and fruitbars are no match for it.

Chance events work their will—sometimes lethally, sometimes playfully and humorously—in many of these stories. Accident and coincidence accumulate, turning into either harsh destiny or, ironically, into something akin to an eerie providence. At the overt level, flux and fragmentation rule. Those who delusively count on permanence had better watch out. (They rarely do.) In "Willow," a young New York bond trader returning to visit an old high school classmate in Wisconsin and finds that nothing is what she imagined it to be. For years she has been measuring her own success against the chaos she'd concocted for her friend's life—all fantasy. Another, much sadder study of this theme is to be found in "Majesty," the story of Ana, a painful-

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ly footloose little girl on holiday with her absentee mother at a Phoenix luxury hotel, who keeps boasting to anyone who will listen that "I can have whatever I want." Sorry, the glossy celebrity magazines lie.

In Mayo's world those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, provided they are feisty enough, have fewer illusions than the spoiled rich, and fare better. At least they have more fun. The final story, "Rainbow's End," is a whirl in every sense, and sends you scrambling back to a name (Peter Rainbow) barely recalled from a walk-on part in the earlier story "Willow"—and then full circle to the first story. The narrator, once upon a time a common cane-cutter, is Juventino Perez Lopez, third husband of Chabela del Rio y de la Fuente Con-

"Dear Acme Parachutes...."

treras, and thanks to a little graft now the governor of Veracruz and an immensely rich man. Not surprisingly, we learn that Chebela's mother, she of the zebras and rollerblading, liked Juventino a lot—two of a kind as it were (though he is grateful grandma didn't leave them those worn Aubussons).

The haywire circuits of our whole electrically but not ethically connected global village stand exposed in Mayo's work. *Sky over El Nido* won the 1995 Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. I am not surprised. □

David Toolan,S.J., *is an associate editor of* America.

ADVOCATING JOURNALISM

Breaking the News
James Fallows
Pantheon Books, $23, 196 pp.

Raymond A. Schroth

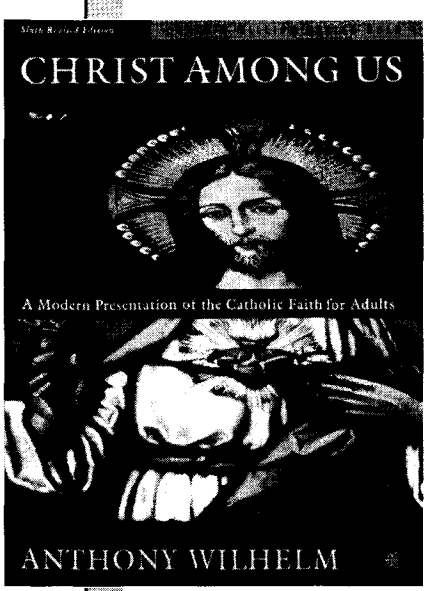
I continually tell my journalism students—and myself—that if they want to be widely loved they should choose some other profession.

The public has "hated" the media for a number of reasons. Since the Nixon years, Republican administrations and conservative publications have orchestrated a campaign to demonize the "liberal" press in a strategy to neutralize critical scrutiny. Press coverage of Vietnam and Watergate chronicled a decade of national disgrace from which the American psyche has not recovered, and part of the public has not forgiven the messengers who brought the bad news.

Furthermore, because the media reflect our culture and thrive economically by pandering to our baser lusts and curiosities, they are, whether we like it or not, "us"; and, while we ogle trash-TV, chuckle at "The McLaughlin Group," or plunk down our dollars for *Vanity Fair* or a deteriorating *New Yorker*, deep down we must despise them—as we do ourselves when old pals keep us out all night and send us home with hangovers.

But recent public and professional griping about the media has taken a different—and oddly perverse—tone. In May, during a week-long series on race,

"The Nation's Most Popular Introduction to Catholicism."—*New York Times*



The most widely used handbook on modern Catholicism has now been revised for the nineties and beyond. This guide to theology and traditions, social and moral issues, personal dialogue and reflection has been annointed "an indispensable guide to applying church teachings to contemporary problems."
—*Time*

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"Nightline" focused on a white Philadelphia neighborhood that had driven out a newly resident black woman. When Ted Koppel asked a studio assembly of the white neighbors what made them "most angry," they replied with one voice, "the media!" which had called public attention to their actions. They were referring to the *local* TV news shows. Yet, here they were all basking in the national media's glow, confident that when they got home their neighbors would gasp, "Saw you on TV."

More recently, *Newsweek* columnist Joe Klein, lambasted by his colleagues for lying repeatedly about his authorship of *Primary Colors*, whined that *he* had become a media vicitm.

In this climate, James Fallows's stimulating *Breaking the News*, a personal, focused analysis of the media's fall in public esteem, has become a media phenomenon itself. Widely reviewed and debated, Fallows's thesis that the media now fail to fulfill their basic function in a democratic society has provoked a year-long stir among his colleagues and adversaries.

What has led journalism to forsake its public function—which is to provide citizens with the tools of democracy, or, in the words of a nineteenth-century *Manchester Guardian* editor, "to see life steady and see it whole"?

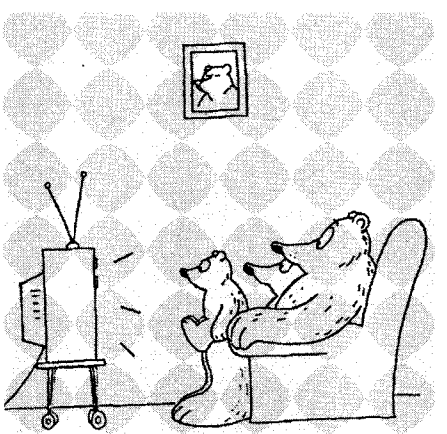
Because "60 Minutes" made money and turned its investigative reporters into stars, the networks began demanding that their news divisions show a profit; coverage declined. Because Joe McGinnis's *The Selling of the President, 1968*, exposed the Nixon campaign as a manipulative fraud, political coverage has degenerated into a prolonged spat between spin doctors and cynical reporters. Meanwhile, chain ownership and "downsizing" have weakened local newspapers, TV competition has killed off general circulation magazines, and the status revolution in big-time journalism has made reporters identify more with the rich and powerful, rather than with the "have-nots" who need journalists to fight their cause.

Political coverage in an election year is particularly superficial because both print and broadcast reporters, who are not sufficiently trained in history, economics, and international affairs, find it easier to report tactics, "water cooler conversations," rather than analyze complex issues. It's easier to debrief a political consultant at lunch on whether the president had a "good or bad week" or call up a Nexis search on a candidate's positions on a computer than to slog to some small town and ask strangers on the street what are the real issues in their lives.

One issue which the press flubbed, "its Vietnam," Fallows argues, was the health-care debate. From the start it focused on the horse-race politics of health care—the secret meetings, the jockeying among interest groups, and the fundamentally wrong-headed Elizabeth McCaughey (now New York lieutenant-governor) attack on the Clinton plan in the *New Republic*—rather than cover the issue in a way that would promote the public good.

Journalism is, in many ways, the most self-critical, and thus self-correcting, profession; but Fallows's prescription for these ills—known as public or civic journalism—contradicts the traditional wisdom of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

In Fallows's version of public journalism, a newspaper sees itself as a citizen participant in an election campaign. It sponsors public forums, researches and defines the issues, rather than distances itself as the "objective" observer who allows the candidates free rein to determine the agenda, the issues, and their timing.



"Still no leads on the individual who's been breaking into homes, eating food, and sleeping in beds."

Occasionally, Fallows's critique sounds as if it were the product more of dialogues with fellow Washingtonians than of conversations in the trenches. At the same time, his case for public journalism would be stronger if he had discussed its antecedents: Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and its imitators, like the *Brooklyn Eagle*, frequently coordinated their investigative reporting and editorials to achieve specific civic goals—like a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty or a 1941 "Ten-Point Plan" to revitalize Brooklyn. Fallows will have a chance to demonstrate his intellectual convictions as the new editor of *U.S. News & World Report*.

Fallows also seems to forget that journalism's purpose is not only to promote democracy but also to entertain. It's supposed to be fun—for reporters and readers alike. Tonya Harding, the Menendez brothers, and O. J. Simpson may be, in the long run, less consequential than the health-care debate; but they are *great stories*, and the press has an obligation to understand and cover them properly.

And public "hatred" of the press, depending on the story, may mean something or nothing at all. Readers may greet a high-minded public-journalism analysis of Latin American poverty or the tax structure with bored silence but erupt in rage over a racial or ethnic story, which, because of the low level of public literacy, they haven't properly understood.

Fallows's virtues are research joined with idealism and righteous indignation which drive him to slam the profession he loves. He closes with a touching anecdote about ABC's James Wooten's pride in a letter praising his *Huntsville Times* cub reporting in the 1960s on Southern rural poverty: "In the apparent absence of any community conscience Mr. Wooten has stepped into the void to serve as a conscience for us all."

Sometimes journalists are loved after all. □

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., *is assistant dean of Fordham College.*

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(Continued from page 4)

vents the church from granting divorces using the power of the keys (Matt. 16:18 and Matt. 18:18) to valid, sacramental, consummated marriages. This course was publicly urged some years ago by a number of national conferences of bishops, including the hierarchies of Great Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands; it has been defended as well by theologians in good standing.

Although those of us working in parishes and in adult religious education appreciate the careful work of many diocesan tribunals in dealing with annulments, I believe the time has come to institute an equally prudent, sensitive, and scripturally based divorce procedure so that, as Ms. Crowe indicates, the search for pre-existing psychological conditions to justify an annulment will not be pushed to the point of incredulity.

Another consideration: Rome is eager for communion betweeen the Western and Eastern churches. Eastern churches grant divorces with the right of remarriage in the church. Rome's "loosening" in this respect can be a step in "binding" us to our separated Eastern co-religionists.

FRANK C. ARRICALE
Queens, N.Y.

We need a better way

Marian Crowe's article reminded me of a time about fifteen years ago when I was sitting with an archbishop in a cathedral sacristy as we prepared to celebrate a Mass for divorced Catholics. Looking pensive, the archbishop asked me, "What do you think about this annulment business?" My reply was less than candid; his response was blunt: "We've gotten ourselves in a legalistic mess; there's gotta be a better way."

In my thirty-one years as a priest, there has been no area of pastoral concern to which I have less commitment than participation in the annulment process. Nevertheless, I spend much time meeting with people who see the process as their only chance of remarrying in the church. Most do not agree with the process but put up with it as the only avenue for them.

I am tired of doing theological and canonical gymnastics to justify the procedure. For example, I no longer try to persuade myself that a marriage of more than thirty years with seven children was not, in fact, a valid Catholic marriage. It seems to me ludicrous to be able to witness the marriage of a Catholic who has had three marriages and divorces "outside the church" and can easily remarry within the church while a devout Catholic, validly married once and now divorced, must go through this procedure.

I have priest friends who in many cases do not even bother with the annulment procedure. I haven't reached that stage but I am more and more frustrated with being part of a canonical system for which I have little re-

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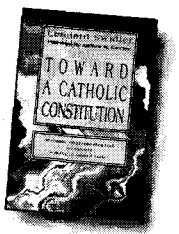

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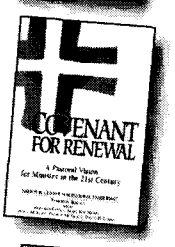

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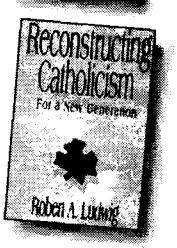

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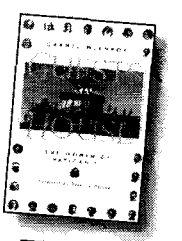

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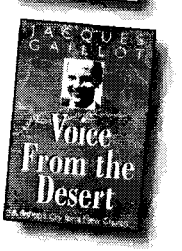

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spect. The archbishop was right: There's gotte be a better way.

GEORGE R. FITZGERALD, C.S.P.
Boulder, Colo.

Big Bang as metaphor

John Polkinghorne's article ["So Finely Tuned a Universe," August 16] was so good it's a shame he had to say of big bang cosmology that "theologically it is insignificant."

There is no more perfect metaphor for God's loving ejaculation of the universe, a "fathering forth" in ecstasy. So much better than the potter with his clay, the magician with his wand, or the architect at his drawing board.

Maybe you have to be a wife and mother to realize this, but I thank the cosmologists for this insight into God's powerful love.

ELIZABETH MCMENAMIN
Scranton, Pa.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code). 1. Title of publication: COMMONWEAL. 2. Dateoffiling: September 30, 1996. 3. Frequency of issue: published biweekly except Christmas, New Year's and monthly July and August. A. No. of issues published annually: 22. B. Annual subscription price: $44. 4. Location of known office of publication: 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. 5. Location of the headquarters of general business offices of the publishers: 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. 6. Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher, Edward S. Skillin, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. Editor, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. Managing Editor, Patrick Jordan, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. 7. Owner (if owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately there under the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of stock): Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. 9. The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months. 10. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: A. Total no. copies printed (Net Press Run): 20,149. B. Paid Circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: 747. 2. Mail subscriptions: 17,466. C. Total paid circulation: 18,213. D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, sample complimentary and other free copies: 735. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D): 18,948. F. 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: 606. 2. Returns from news agents: 595. G. Total (sum of E and F should equal net press run shown in A): 20,149. Actual number of copies of a single issue published nearest to filing date: Total number copies printed (Net Press Run): 20,675. B. Paid Circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: 755. 2. Mail subscriptions: 18,012. C. Total paid circulation: 18,767. D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, sample complimentary and other free copies: 695. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D): 19,462. F. 1 Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: 618. 2. Returns from news agents: 595. Total (sum of E and F should equal net press run shown in A): 20,675. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Richard Haas, Business Manager.

An unsound complaint (II)

Jay Miller's complaint [Correspondence, August 16] about Archbishop Quinn's complaint about the Vatican's rejection of the original translation of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* is itself unsound.

Shouldn't a translation be made by those who actually live in a language? English has a particular problem, since it lacks a separate word to refer to both men and women—unlike Latin, for instance, which has *mulier* for a woman, *vir* for a man, and *homo* for a human being. I myself used to argue that the word *man* has two meanings. I may not be offended by its use to include both genders, but I have come to understand that others are, and what does offend me is the dismissal of their concerns and feelings as "silly pretensions."

EDDA H. HACKL, M.D.
Chicago, Ill.

What's to discuss?

Your editorial of July 12 ["An Archbishop Speaks Up"] makes clear that in your view Archbishop John R. Quinn was truthful and fair-minded in his Oxford lecture. I believe that in fairness to your readers you should print Cardinal John O'Connor's reply in its entirety. In it he asserts that his interpretations of certain situations were exactly opposite those of the archbishop.

Archbishop Quinn stated that the English-speaking cardinals of the world supported the use of inclusive language in the English version of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In his response Cardinal O'Connor said this was news to him and other English-speaking cardinals to whom he has spoken.

The archbishop also states that contraception and the ordination of women should be discussed. Why? These two questions are infallibly settled in *Humanae vitae* and the pope's definitive statement on the ordination of women.

Your statement that fair-minded Christians and others may disagree on contraception, homosexuality, celibacy, and even the nature of papal infallibility is true, but doesn't this lead to dissent and finally rejection? The orthodox Roman Catholic assents to the magisterium of the church and the pronouncements of the Vicar of Christ on earth, John Paul II.

The church is no stranger to dissent. Many walked away when they could not accept Jesus' teachings. I pray that all believers will be enlightened and unite in peace.

HELEN IMWALLE
Cincinnati, Ohio

The editors reply:

In fairness to readers (and ourselves) we note (1) that *Catholic New York*, which published Cardinal O'Connor's lengthy reply to Archbishop Quinn, did not print the lengthy text of the Quinn lecture; and (2) that interested readers can find the cardinal's column in the August 29 issue of *Origins*, the documentary service of the Catholic News Service, which had earlier (July 18) published Archbishop Quinn's full text.

With respect to the meaning of orthodoxy and of dissent, the gap between our correspondent's views and ours is too wide to be bridged in a brief comment. But: (1) We happily join in her prayer for enlightenment and peace among all believers; (2) we suggest that Catholics who argue with the church ought not be identified with people who, rejecting Jesus' teachings, walked away and stayed away.

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THIS TOLL'S FOR THEE

Peter Feuerherd

November 3, 1994, the day after election day: I have the privilege of hitching a ride into "the city"—as we Queens residents refer to Manhattan's Skyscraper National Park—with a conservative activist wannabe politician. His side won yesterday.

He details how the new Republican Congress and the new Republican governor will create a pristine utopia unhindered by the constraints of government regulation. Traffic runs smoothly and my driver is in a happy mood, buoyed by yesterday's electoral successes and perhaps by the scent of political appointment.

But then we come to the epicenter of evil—the lines leading to the toll booths of the Queens-Midtown Tunnel. My interlocutor shakes his fist at the skies, curses this monument to liberal government duplicity, and rages at the extortion of the $3.50 one-way toll. This, he declaims, while pointing to the lines of exasperated drivers, is what big government does: pads payrolls and afflicts innocent motorists with unreasonable demands—all to feed the welfare-state monster.

This! This will all change, he promises me, when the newly ascendant conservative revolution comes to power.

Two years have now passed. I think about my conversation and his political promises as I drive back from vacation in August and spend $11 driving to and from Brooklyn through Staten Island into New Jersey and back.

My political pal did join the new conservative revolution. He has a very responsible job with the agency that supervises many New York-area bridges and tunnels. However, New York motorists have not been liberated from the fetters of big government as my $11 tab clearly shows.

We see here the limits of political power. I remind myself of this in the midst of the 1996 election campaign in which the candidates and their spinmeisters have declared an epic struggle between the forces of post-hippie decadence that threaten the nation's moral fiber and a reactionary conservativism that delights in withholding welfare monies from widows and orphans.

Take for example a recent report on skyrocketing drug abuse among teenagers. Are teens hooked on drugs in your town? The talk show hosts think so and blame one man: William Jefferson Clinton, the college student who didn't inhale.

I consult our resident expert: my daughter, a junior in a New York City public high school. "Are your drug-using classmates influenced by who sits in the Oval Office?" She rolls her eyes.

It is an unscientifically posed question, of course, to an unscientific sample. But her incredulity suggest to me that the days are long gone when a sitting president might be a model or a guide for any kind of behavior, least of all that of teen-agers.

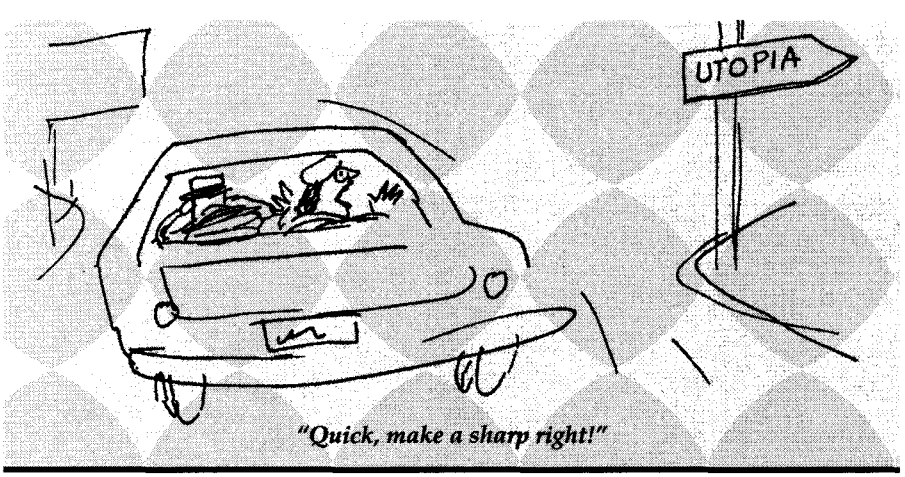
'Twas not always so. In 1968, my wife and I were both eleven years old. I was growing up in suburban Long Island; she, a recently arrived immigrant, was living in Brooklyn. We both recall being enthralled and horrified by the political events of that year, including the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy, as well as the Democratic Convention. We followed everything with keen interest; these events mattered.

Not now, not for the younger generation. While watching the Republican Convention in San Diego this year, my fourteen-year-old son had one question for me: "Is this why the Mets are playing in Mexico?"

I'm not old enough (yet) to complain about this generation not being up to snuff. When I was their age, I was interested in politics, now they are interested in computers, science, and popular music.

In many ways, they are smarter. They have already concluded what has taken me decades to arrive at: politicians, at best and at worst, have only a marginal impact on what this year's campaign experts have told us are fundamental political issues—family values, sexual morality, addiction, and personal character.

If my enraged interlocutor and political appointee can't affect the bridge and tunnel tolls that fetter New York's drivers—something that government actually controls—why should we believe that politicians can have any impact on behaviors and attitudes that lie far beyond the realm of political influence? □



"Quick, make a sharp right!"

Peter Feuerherd *is assistant editor of the* Long Island Catholic *and national affairs writer for the* National Catholic Register.

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